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NATURE AND SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

KLOOF AND KARROO.
Longmans, Green & Co., 1889.

GUN AND CAMERA IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.
E. Stanford, 1893.

TALES OF SOUTH AFRICA.
A. Constable & Co., 1896.

THE VICTORIAN ERA IN SOUTH AFRICA.
"African Critic" Office, 1897.

A BLUE WILDEBEEST HUNT. (*See p.* 205.) [*Frontispiece.*

NATURE AND SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA

BY

H. A. BRYDEN

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TO

LORD LOCH OF DRYLAW, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., P.C.

GOVERNOR OF THE CAPE COLONY

AND HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR SOUTH AFRICA

1889—1895

Eberhardt 29 Sept 47 Eberhardt

PREFACE

THESE sketches of sport and natural history in South Africa necessarily refer to only a portion of the wonderful fauna and avi-fauna of the country. Two or three stout volumes would be required to deal fairly with the rich store of zoological life still left to the various territories south of the Zambesi. I can only claim that those subjects upon which I have written are dealt with pretty thoroughly, and that the chapters on sport are true pictures of life in the wilderness.

It will be said, possibly, that much of the latter portion of this book is a mere Jeremiad—a lament upon the gradual disappearance of the great game of a country originally far more richly endowed with animal life than any other part of the world. But my pages merely reflect the sentiments of any true lover of nature who has actual knowledge of South Africa, and has followed the history of the extermination of its wild life during the present century.

The days when enthusiastic explorers traversed for the first time those vast

"Unfooted plains, where feed the herds of Pan,"

are long since gone by, and the naturalist and sportsman of the present time can but look back with an infinite regret to the lamentable and incredible waste which has swept from existence so much of the apparently inexhaustible fauna of but two generations since. The spectacle of South Africa a mere void and lifeless stretch of country, bereft of those magnificent throngs of wild creatures, which men still in middle age can easily remember, is too hateful to contemplate; yet such a spectacle is now within measurable distance of accomplishment. If the attention of the public at home and in South Africa can be seriously directed to this subject; if the remnant of the wild game still left south of the Zambesi can be saved from the fate of utter extinction—a fate which, from present appearances, looks like being realized within the next thirty years—the writing and publication of these pages will not have been wholly in vain.

Some portions of this book have appeared in the *Field*, the *Saturday Review*, the *Fortnightly Review*, *Chambers's Journal*, the *Pall Mall Magazine*, and *Baily's Magazine*. I desire to thank the editors of these publications for their kindly permission to reprint here.

H. A. Bryden.

September 1897.

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NATURE AND SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA

CHAPTER I

THE PELICAN OF THE WILDERNESS

Early legends concerning this bird—Impressions of Zoo Pelicans—First sight of wild birds—Wonderful spectacle in Ngamiland—Curious evolutions—Habits of the birds—Shooting Pelicans—Description, size, and measurements of *Pelecanus onocrotalus*—Curious use for pouch—Eagles and Pelicans—Pelicans as sea-fishers—Notes by Andersson and Chapman—A long shot at sunset.

ALTHOUGH that curious bird, the pelican, the *Onocrotalus* of the ancients, seems to have been known almost ever since the dimmest historical times, and although quaint legends have for ages gathered about it, not many people seem to have closely observed its habits.

The "pelican in her piety," wounding her own breast for the sake of her young—a tale as old as the hills almost—is either a learned fiction of the heralds, possibly arising from the blood-red hook or tip to the bird's bill, or, as some suppose, the legend has been

gathered about the wrong bird. The flamingo, as most naturalists are agreed, does, by means of her bill, discharge into the mouths of her offspring a reddish, bloody-looking mess or secretion, and the story of the pelican feeding her young with blood from her own breast may have arisen from this circumstance, and from a confusion of the birds. There is another and simpler theory that the venerable tale took its origin simply from a trick the pelican has of pressing its huge bill upon its breast for the purpose of emptying the pouch. At all events, beyond this absurd, if rather poetical, idea of the dim ages of the past, it is difficult to gather much reliable information concerning this quaint and interesting bird. Until I arrived on the banks of the Botletli river (Ngamiland) in 1890, I had never seen the pelican in a state of nature; and my ideas having been based on observations made at the Zoological Society's Gardens, where the birds are practically banished from their most familiar elements—air and water—I had formed but a poor idea of their ways and habits. The very first evening on which my companion and I rode our tired horses, after a sixty-five miles' waterless journey, down to the Lake river (Botletli) was quite sufficient to shatter these impressions. Instead of an awkward, silly-looking fowl, moping stupidly within its narrow space in Regent's Park, day after day, inanimate and lifeless, save at

feeding-time, a very different bird engaged our attention.

It was sunset as we struck the river, and day was sinking far away across the flat and endless plains in ruddy splendour. On our right, a vast mass of flaming reeds (now being burnt off by the natives) sent an immense column of smoke far into the heavens. High in the air above the river, their flight clearly marked in long, wavy skeins against the rose and amber sky, flew slowly and steadily hundreds upon hundreds of great birds, which Joseph, the native boy riding with us, informed us were pelicans. It was a marvellous and most beautiful sight. Each bird followed its neighbour in single file in the most regular order; the great wings (and no one can imagine how great is the spread of a pelican's wings till they have been extended and measured in the dead specimen) beating the passage through the air in solemn and stately fashion. There were numerous different bands in the air, each numbering some hundreds, and as the long skeins and circles occasionally crossed or united in mid-air, all sharply silhouetted against the evening sky, the effect was indescribably beautiful. Presently, before we had actually reached the river, the skeins trended lower and lower, and the birds sank, still in orderly and majestic flight, into the shallows and reed-beds for their night's repast and repose.

I have seen many strange spectacles in South Africa, but that first sunset on the Lake river—the dying splendour of the sky, the flame and smoke of the burning reed-beds, and the wonderful flight of the pelicans—will never fade from memory.

Next morning, at sunrise, as we lay in our blankets, the first sounds that met our ears were the soft, melancholy whistling, uttered invariably in five notes, of the pelicans as they rose from the river, and before taking their departure for the day, again repeated their evolutions in the sky. These evolutions were carried out every morning and evening, with unfailing regularity, for about half-an-hour. After the morning performance, the birds invariably hied them to a great salt-pan (or what is called a salt-pan in South Africa)—in reality a brack-pan, upon which, after the rains, is found an efflorescence of salt or lime. The pelicans fished night and morning, but I fancy their main feed took place in the early morning, after which, with their pouches well filled, they betook themselves to the salt-pan a few miles distant. Here they seemed to sit or stand about all day; what they did or what they thought about during the long, hot hours I could never clearly make out. At about four o'clock, or a little after, if we were at the wagons, we could tell by the long lines of flight, and presently by the soft whistling notes and the distant beat of wings,

that the birds were coming to the water for the night.

Although we travelled a long way up the Botletli, we never saw pelicans in such numbers as at this the lower end. At this time—July—the annual inundation described by Livingstone in his early travels had not yet reached the extremity, near the vast reed-swamp, erroneously called Lake Komadau, in which the river loses itself. The river was shallow, and swarms of fish were shut up in the chains of pools. Here the pelicans, as, too, did the fishing-eagles (*Haliætus vocifer*), found an illimitable supply of food, with very little trouble in the catching, and no doubt this fact accounted for the enormous number of the birds we saw.

At first the birds were remarkably tame, and flew slowly over our heads, as they came down towards the river, within easy reach of the shot-guns. A closer inspection of their flight showed us that the wing-beats are slow and very even, and the birds are not easily hurried. The shortish body, long neck and bill, and head tucked well back; the slow, steady beat of the long pinions; and the unfailing regularity and evenness with which these quaint birds followed one another, were extremely interesting.

Upon the second evening, as the pelicans came overhead, I was lucky enough to bring one down with a charge of No. 5 shot. This must have been

somewhat of a fluke, and the shot must have instantly touched a vital spot, for we found afterwards that, even to bullet-wounds, the birds did not easily succumb. The next evening Dove (my hunting friend) shot one with a Martini-Henry sporting rifle. The bird fell, but was making off rapidly to some cover, when Dove gave it another shot. Even that by no means finished it. As we walked up, the creature struck at us fiercely with its formidable-looking bill. It showed no signs of dying, and another shot was fired at close quarters, and even then, with three bullets clean through its body, the pelican was extremely loth to give up the ghost.

The pelican found on the Lake river was undoubtedly *Pelecanus onocrotalus* (Linnæus), but I am inclined to think that the measurements credited to this species in Layard's *Birds of South Africa* are hardly representative of the specimens shot by us. Dove and I carefully measured from wing-tip to wing-tip of a bird held stretched out. The measurement was 9 ft. 8 in. This, although perhaps not a strictly fair measurement, hardly tallies with the *single* wing measurement—2 ft. 5 in.—given in Layard. The extreme length of this specimen was over 6 ft. 3 in. Indeed, until one gets one of these birds down, and begins to inspect its proportions closely, one has small idea of its great size. I photographed the specimen I have referred to; it was held up by its

neck by a native standing in the centre, while two other men each held the outstretched wings at the tips. The general colour of the plumage is white, suffused slightly with a pale pink, and greyish upon the wings. The quill-feathers are a very dark grey, which, however, is only to be seen when the bird is in flight. In mature specimens there is a touch of yellowish gold upon the breast-feathers. The head is crested, the face and neck are bare, and the pouch is of a bright yellow colour. The soft flexible membrane of the pouch we found, by the way, when cut from the bill and dried and prepared by our men, to make, with a little sewing, an excellent tobacco-pouch of many ounce capacity.

The pouch is very distensible, and when filled will hold a number of good-sized fish. Livingstone, in his *Missionary Travels*, has noted the method of attack made by the river-eagle (*Haliætus vocifer*) upon a fishing-pelican. The eagle makes a swoop at the pelican, which, in a state of dire alarm, opens its bill to cry out "Murder!" The eagle then coolly seizes a fish from the open pouch and flies off. I never saw this incident, but it is well known to the natives. The pelican, big though it is, is a defenceless creature against the larger raptorial birds, and is, I imagine, only formidable to the fishes. The *Pelecanus onocrotalus* was the only species observed by us on the Lake river; but another and smaller

species, *Pelecanus rufescens*, is well known in Southern Africa, and has often been observed in the Cape Colony, Natal, and other places. The amount of fish consumed by the many thousands of these birds on the Botletli river and round Lake Ngami must be prodigious. The Ngamiland water systems, however, swarm with piscine life, and the supply seems always constant in spite of the attacks of pelicans, otters, crocodiles, eagles, hawks, and natives.

The late C. J. Andersson noticed that at Walfisch Bay on the south-west coast these pelicans had become excessively shy, and that it had become all but impossible for Europeans to get within rifle-shot of them. They exhibited, however, little fear of natives, and were in the habit of watching them at a short distance while spearing fish in the shallows, becoming even bold enough to snatch the fish from before their very eyes, and so anticipate their sport. He observes, too, that the pelican nests among bushes, and lays a single egg, white, and of beautiful oval shape. Chapman, in his travels, writing also of these pelicans at Walfisch Bay, mentions that they "pursue their prey nightly in the shallow lagoons, driving the fish, by flapping their wings on the water, near the shore, and catching them while floundering."

These great birds are magnificent swimmers, and in the Botletli seem to have no difficulty in supply-

ing themselves freely with food—more especially at the time I speak of, when the water is low and the fish are locked in chains of pools.

After a little shooting, our long-billed friends became rather less confiding, but were always easily accessible to a rifle-shot. On the return journey I was sitting one evening at sunset on my wagon-box, watching with never-failing interest the wonderful spectacle of these birds threading their majestic way far aloft in the heavens, their long legions thrown sharply in relief against the brilliant sky. Dove sat hard by on his own wagon, also watching. Presently a band came over our way. In their evolutions a small knot of the birds sailed closely together. The temptation was too great; I had my rifle in my hand, and, taking rapid aim, made an extremely lucky shot at a distance of some two hundred and fifty yards. The fall of the stricken pelican was, from the greatness of the altitude, very remarkable. Over and over it turned, seeming as though it would never reach the earth. When picked up by one of the boys it was stone-dead.

CHAPTER II

A DAY IN KHAMA'S COUNTRY

Pleasures of the veldt—"Pheasant" shooting—The red-billed Francolin—Pearl-spotted Owl—Pretty sport—Trekking in the Thirst-land—Light *v.* heavy wagons—A handsome Falcon—Various foes of feathered game—Reach Seruey, and outspan—Notes on Bechuanas—Barutse wayfarers—Burchell's Courser and its habits—Parrots—Trekking continued—Partridge-shooting at sunset—Night outspan.

THERE are few greater pleasures in this world than to wake up in a comfortable wagon as dawn begins to steal upon the veldt, and find yourself free and untrammelled in the heart of the remote wilderness, with pure Nature spreading around you. How infinitely more preferable is it to listen to the sharp call of the francolin, the crowing of the bustard, the soft cry of sand-grouse as they come to water, than to hear the dreary rattle of early wheels upon the street, the yelp of the milkman, or the distressing clangour of ill-conditioned bells.

On June 22, 1890, we were two days out from Khama's new town of Palachwe, North Bechuanaland, heading for the Kalahari Thirst-land. We had

been disappointed in water in the Lotsani river-bed, and for forty-eight hours the oxen had tasted no liquid. In our barrels we had just sufficient muddy water for ourselves and servants; we were therefore all anxious to reach Seruey, with its better prospect of fair water.

We had trekked a good portion of the night, and at earliest dawn, tired of the incessant jolting, we rose, put on our clothes, took down our shot-guns from their wagon-hooks, and proceeded to look for some breakfast. It was a glorious morning. The sun came up with all that magnificence which in these regions he never fails to display day after day; the air was cool, sweet, and wonderfully refreshing. We found ourselves travelling in a sort of shallow grassy valley, skirted upon either hand by low stony hills, well clothed with bush and grass. While my shooting comrades, Mackay and Dove, took the left-hand side, I made my way to the right. There was no choice for shooting; everywhere the veldt looked likely for francolin, and we had already heard the scream of "pheasants" from the hills around. I took my liver-coloured pointer, Don, to assist my quest; Dove and Mackay had another pointer, Scotty, and a well-nosed mongrel, Ponto, to help them out. We were not long in finding game. Except along the Crocodile river (Limpopo), and by the spreading lagoons of the Botletli, I never saw

francolins much more numerous. The species so abundant in this valley were red-billed francolins (*Francolinus adspersus*), first discovered by Sir James Alexander on his expedition through Great Namaqualand in 1836. These birds are usually found in coveys of from eight to twelve; they are never far from water, and their presence is an unfailing indication of that precious element. The grassy kopjes here teemed with these francolins; the only difficulty was to find them and put them up. The "partridges" and "pheasants" of South Africa lie much more closely than do their cousins of England; and as scent in this dry country is poor and catchy, they often succeed in completely baffling the man with the shot-gun. I heard Dove's and Mackay's guns going two or three times, and knew they were at work. In a little while Don had nosed out a covey for me. A single bird got up within easy range, and fell to my right barrel.

My pointer drew on rapidly; it was evident that the birds were running in front, in search of thicker covert. In spite of my rather frantic protests, Don now makes a dash, and three or four more francolins rise and fly a short distance to some thick bush near the summit of the low hill. To this I make my way. Don is admonished, and then starts hunting again. These red-billed francolins are, in the thick bush in which they love to hide themselves, almost im-

possible to drive out. They squat immovable as stones, or sit up among the thickets out of reach of the dog, or, where trees are about, they will take shelter in the branches. Their colouring is a dull, greyish drab, and even up in a tree, right in front of the gunner, they are hard to make out—they sit so close, and their colouring is so protective.

However, Don pokes about eagerly, and at last succeeds in flushing another bird, which, again, I bag. The remainder of the covey effectually defy discovery, and we leave them secure in their protecting shelter. A hundred yards further along the ridge of the kopje a biggish brown bird flies slowly out, and settles a little beyond. Advancing cautiously, I approach the spot. The bird tumbles rather clumsily out upon the wing; it is an owl, and I have no difficulty in bringing it down. It turns out, upon examination, to be a handsome, rather small owl, known as the African Pearl-spotted owl (*Athene perlata*), La Chevêchette Perlée of Levaillant's *Oiseaux d'Afrique*. Although not well known in Cape Colony, this small owl, with its notable spotted plumage, is pretty common in the interior. It is, I think, more often seen in daylight than any other species. Andersson remarks that it is nearly as much at home in daylight as at night, and can see its way perfectly in dazzling sunshine. This is rather a strong assertion concerning a creature so

usually purblind in daylight as an owl; but it is, at all events, certain that the pearl-spotted owl makes little difficulty in getting about in daylight. The bird shows small fear of man, and, when disturbed, makes only a short flight to some adjacent resting-place.

Carefully placing the dead owl in my game-bag, I continue my march, and again I hear the guns of my comrades among the hills on my left flank.

It is not long before Don stands once more at point, careful and rigid, in some long grass. I approach with caution, and almost from under my feet a francolin rises. He flies straight into the heart of the sunlight, and between the glare and bad shooting I perpetrate a shameful miss. At the report, up springs another bird, fifteen yards away. This time I make no mistake, and the victim falls. So far, well. My friends are good shots, and are undoubtedly scoring, and we shall have a decent game-stew for the evening meal. A close search by Don fails to discover more pheasants hereabouts, and again we move on. The wagons are steadily trekking through the valley, half-a-mile ahead. I can catch, now and again, the high voices of the drivers urging on the now jaded spans. Occasionally I hear the loud crack of a wagon-whip. That is Patshalan, our second driver. David, who manages the big wagon, is far more judicious, and trusts almost

entirely to his voice and intimate acquaintance with his team to keep them going. There is a vast difference between good and bad wagon-drivers. A good and careful man, such as David, is a treasure indeed. In the hands of such a man a span will accomplish heavy, distressing, and waterless journeys with half the labour and fatigue—and often loss of life—shown by a span driven by a careless and flogging driver. A good deal of the dreadful waste of oxflesh constantly going on in South Africa arises, undoubtedly, from cruel and careless driving.

Of course, in crossing the Thirst-lands, where, for three or four days on end, no water can be found for oxen, hard and persistent trekking is unavoidable. But, even in such straits, the careful driver, though he may, and indeed must, use his whip towards the end of the journey, will exercise skill and discretion, and bring out most of his span with little loss from death, though with infinite waste in flesh. In spite, however, of the most careful driving, the long "thirsts" of the Kalahari and North Bechuanaland country are terribly trying to oxflesh. I never saw a greater contrast in cattle than in ours before and after this expedition. We quitted Khama's with oxen fat, lusty, and in fine condition; we came in, some months later, with our beasts mere gaunt frameworks of skin and bone. The span drawing the lighter wagon (driven by Patshalan) had suffered

most. One had died from thirst; three others had lain down and been abandoned, yet had risen during the cool of night and followed the wagon-spoor through the desert. These were of course useless for the remainder of the journey. David's team, although terribly run down, had all stood to their yokes and struggled through to the bitter end. Yet these eighteen oxen had drawn an infinitely heavier wagon.

In crossing the Kalahari Thirst-land again I should always be inclined to travel with much lighter wagons than the average up-country hunting-wagon, even if one had to take a considerably reduced outfit. A light spring-wagon is infinitely more adapted for crossing these trying wastes, waterless, and deep in yielding sand, than the heavy, cumbrous, though comfortable, castle on wheels so dear to the South African Dutchman. The Bechuana natives use pack-oxen and riding-oxen for this part of the country, and accomplish long waterless journeys with apparent ease.

I secured another brace of pheasants along the kopjes before descending for breakfast. I shot also a fine falcon on the hill-side. The bird was sitting moodily upon a thorn-tree sunning itself in the bright rays of the morning. It was probably, like myself, on the look-out for breakfast. The falcon gave me an easy shot, but took some despatching

when brought down. A good-sized falcon or hawk is an awkward creature to deal with when wounded, especially when it is desired to secure its skin and plumage undamaged. A simple and very excellent plan, since mentioned to me by the well-known naturalist, Mr. J. E. Harting, is to throw a piece of looped string over the hawk's head, and draw the loop tight from both ends. In this way the bird is quickly and mercifully put out of its misery, without harm to the plumage. This bird proved to be a male of the *Falco biarmicus*, sometimes called the South African Lanneroid Falcon (*Falco cervicalis* of Lichtenstein and Gray's Hand List). It is a fine member of the *Falconidæ*, and is pretty widely distributed in South Africa. The upper colouring is bluish-grey, curiously barred transversely with a deeper shade; the head is reddish-brown, variegated with black; the under parts are of a warm purplish hue, black spotted upon the thighs; the tail is barred beneath in different shades of grey; the legs and cere are yellow; the eye is of a rich clear orange. The female is more ruddy in general colouring than the male.

This fine falcon, in length measuring some 17 in. or 18 in., is well known as a destroyer of game birds. It is, too, a great ravager of poultry. Mr. Layard, in his *Birds of South Africa*, says of it: "It will not hesitate to dash at a flock of pigeons

feeding close to the doors of a dwelling, and in the midst of people working on the werf." It is a strong, bold flier, gifted with immense speed. Its stoop is lightning-like. I have seen one of these birds dash at a covey of Orange River francolins, not far from where I have been shooting, and secure its booty.

It is marvellous, considering the immense varieties and numbers of hawks, falcons, and eagles in South Africa, how feathered game manage to keep up their numbers. They must lose heavily in the course of a single season from the assaults of these aërial foes. They have, too, to defend themselves from many jackals, wild cats, lynxes, civets, meerkats, and others of the *Viverridæ*, as well as snakes. And yet, in spite of the persecution of these wild-bred foes, and the attacks of the half-starved Kaffir dogs near native kraals, francolins, bustards, guinea-fowl, and other game are found everywhere in plenty. Go where you will in the veldt—save in the most waterless recesses of the desert—you may always rely upon having fair bird-shooting. Near water and river-courses the shooting is often excellent, but you must have with you a decent pointer, or in the long grass veldt and thick brush you are likely to be hard put to it to discover the aggravating game birds (sometimes almost impossible to kick up, sometimes running far in front of you) of South Africa.

I now descended the kopje, and followed the

wagon-spoor. My comrades were just ahead. It was still early, 8.15 a.m.; the wagons had reached the water of Seruey, and were outspanned; the oxen—poor thirsty wretches—were distending themselves as fast as their throats could swallow water. An ox's drinking capacity is enormous; he sucks down gallons, and a span or two, after a heavy thirst, will seriously diminish a respectable pool. They drink often till the water literally runs from their mouths. Our horses had been sent on during the night, and, having drunk early, were now knee-haltered and feeding among the long grass. Our cook-boys had already a fire lighted, some chops and liver were frying, and the coffee-kettle was nearing boiling-point. The wagon-dogs, after slaking their thirst, were strolling or lying about, watching the proceedings, and waiting for porridge, or any other delicacy that should fall in their way.

Altogether it was a cheerful scene, and, sharp-set as we were, we sat down to breakfast with more than usual zest. To complete the measure of our content, some natives from the cattle-post here (Seruey) brought a quantity of new milk in the great Bechuana pitcher-like wooden vessels. They only required a few percussion-caps ("doppies") in exchange, and we had no difficulty in effecting a deal. At this place, and henceforward for the remainder of this expedition to Ngamiland, we found the natives all

what the Boers call "kaal Kaffirs" (naked Kaffirs). European clothing had finally disappeared, and these sons of the wilderness, lightly clad though they were, looked far more picturesque in their native garb than did their brethren in store-clothing farther down country. Skin cloaks for the men at morning and night—when the air was chilly—and cloaks and a sort of skin petticoat for the women, were, together with beads and metal bangles, the principal articles of attire. Most Bechuana men, and some of the bushmen (Masarwas), carry, slung at the neck in a wooden case, the long, sharpened, skewer-like needle with which they do their sewing. All the karosses (fur rugs) and cloaks, for which the Bechuanas have from time immemorial been famed, are made by the men. With the aid of this long needle and very fine sinew, taken from the backs of small antelopes, they do their sewing; a hole is pierced by the needle, and the sinew passed through by hand. It is a laborious task, and consumes much time, which, however, is of small consequence to these people. No one who has noted the sewing of these native-made karosses can deny that the work is very neat, beautiful, and effective. It is curious to notice in native towns that the men are more often than not to be seen hanging about, sewing karosses, while the women are out in the fields, planting and hoeing, or carrying water in great jars to and from the fountains.

On the other hand, the men entirely monopolize the care of cattle and the labours of hunting and of war.

Dove and Mackay had come in with three and a half brace of francolins, besides having lost one or two birds in long grass and covert, so that we had now again some game in the larder. While we sat at breakfast, some wild-looking natives, coming down from the Zambesi on their weary pilgrimage to the diamond-fields, came and camped not far from our wagons. They were from the far Barutse valley, and, poor fellows! looked as if they had travelled long and fared hard. All their worldly possessions consisted of a few lumps of crystallized salt from some salt-pan, a little grain, their gourd calabashes for carrying water, their skin cloaks, a Lechwè water-buck skin or two, and assegais and battle-axes. It seemed but a poor outfit for that terribly long tramp of hundreds of miles to Kimberley; yet natives from the Zambesi and the farthest parts of South Africa are to be constantly seen on their way to and from Kimberley and Johannesburg. It speaks volumes for the faith of these remote and barbarous native tribes in the good faith and honesty of the British in South Africa, who monopolize the mining centres, attract labour, and pay the wages. To my mind, this is one of the most striking evidences of English progress to be seen in all South Africa. We

witnessed many of these pilgrimages on our way up and down country.

These Zambesi people had some very beautiful specimens of barbed assegais and native axes, and were willing to trade them for meal and money. We secured some excellent examples of native work in this way. Dove also bartered a very curious pipe made out of a koodoo horn. These natives had, by the way, some fresh koodoo meat with them, which they had obtained somehow on the road a day or so beyond.

Our oxen rested after their forty-eight hours' waterless trek until well into the afternoon, when the heat of day was past. After the morning meal we therefore pottered about upon a grass flat near camp. Dove shot a brace of those charming game birds, the Coqui francolins (*Francolinus subtorquatus*), the smallest and most beautiful of all African partridges. Upon the same flat I also shot, as a specimen, a single Burchell's courser. This small and very elegant member of this long-legged branch of the great plover family (*Charadriadæ*) is found here and there in flat open country in much of South Africa. Its general colouring is fawn, or sandy-buff—a very protective colouring, too, in much of the country it inhabits. There are reddish-brown patches upon the neck and front of the head, and a black and white wreath or crown runs from

the eyes to the back of the head; the rump and tail are ash-coloured, the tail tipped white and black; the chin, the lower part of the stomach, and the thighs are white. Black and white appears, too, upon the wing-feathers; but as these birds so generally run, and so seldom, comparatively, fly, this is not so often noticeable. These charming birds run, as a rule, in small bands of from seven to a dozen. They are a pretty sight, coursing, as they do, on their stilt-like legs over the dry plains. Having secured my courser, I sat down by Mackay, who was resting in camp, skinned the bird, and put it away. It is curious that the late C. J. Andersson should have never observed this bird in South-West Africa, Namaqualand, Damaraland, or Ovampoland. It is widely distributed in other parts of South Africa, yet in Andersson's *Birds of Damaraland* there is no mention of it. The Senegal courser, a very closely allied species—almost identical, indeed—seems to have been procured by Andersson at Ondonga, in Ovampoland, but Burchell's courser is not mentioned. Still, one can hardly conclude from the observations (necessarily limited) of one man, however keen, that Burchell's courser is never to be found in country so adjacent to Bechuanaland as are Damaraland and other parts of South-West Africa.

Dove came in a little later with a pretty parrot, one of Rüppell's parrots, which he had very lightly

winged. These pretty little green, blue, and yellow parrots (never failing indicators of water) are, when taken young, made great pets of by the Transvaal Dutch farmers. Dove fashioned a rude cage for his new capture, and took no end of trouble over it. The bird, although scarcely at all wounded, was too old to be tamed. It refused almost all food, fiercely resisted all attempts at friendliness, and finally, after a few days, died, much to our regret. If it had been a young bird, no doubt we could have reared it.

At half-past three, after a long rest, the horses were got in from grass, the oxen brought up to the yokes and inspanned, the water-casks firmly lashed in their places at the back of the wagons, the rest of our gear safely stowed, and at four o'clock away we trekked again.

The light wagon led the way; Billy, the goat (a most amusing character), marched next, in his usual independent fashion, snatching, now and again, a morsel of food as he tramped briskly along; then the big wagon followed, each wagon being drawn by eighteen oxen; the dogs, to the number of six or seven, ranged hither and thither as it pleased them. In rear of all our eight hunting-ponies, shepherded by Seleti, the horse-boy, followed at their leisure. Few sights are more picturesque than the long and varied line of an expedition upon trek; the memory of such a scene remains firmly imprinted in the

mind of every one who has travelled in the South African interior.

We were not long in motion before the deep, rocky bed of a dry river-course intersected our path. There was a sharp descent, and the boulders and rocks were rather abundant. The wagons bumped, crashed, and swayed perilously, but there was no upset, and we came safely across.

A little later, just at sundown, we entered upon a magnificent bit of grassy, park-like country, inclosed in a setting of picturesque hills. Dove and I got down from the wagons and stretched our legs. The grass was very tall, reaching to the shoulders; yet, in spite of this, Dove found a covey of Coqui francolins, and shot a brace very neatly. It was a curious scene. I, who was close behind, could see only my friend's hat, shoulders, bare arms, and levelled gun, and the stricken partridges as they fell instantly to his shots. There was, as usual, a glorious sunset, and the affair was perfectly silhouetted against the strong golden light and the evening sky. Scotty, the pointer, who had found the game, was of course completely hidden in the tall, yellow grass. Numbers of sand-grouse were to be seen and heard hurrying to their evening drink at the nearest water.

This was but a short trek, and an hour or so later we outspanned for the night by a pool of water,

under a high, flat-topped, stony hill. The fires were lighted; the horses fed on their usual fare (mealies), and fastened for the night to the wagon-wheels; the oxen were soon lying peacefully at their yokes. We cooked a capital supper of game-bird stew, and then sat smoking and chatting by the pleasant fire-light. Above us loomed, vast and hollow, the wonderful night sky of deep indigo, gemmed with a million diamond points of stars. The air was cool and delicious. We were now at last on the verge of the game country (we found koodoo on the morrow), and the pleasures of anticipation lent an added zest to the charm of night by the camp-fire in the African wilderness.

CHAPTER III

SAND-GROUSE

Interesting group—Mixed characteristics—Protective colouring—Powers of flight—Punctual habits—Drinking time—Guides to water—Genera—Pallas's Sand-grouse—Appearances in Britain—Ruthless slaughter—The genus *Pterocles*—Its range and members—South African species—"Namaqua Partridge"—Double-banded Sand-grouse—Their habits—Good flight-shooting—Sand-grouse in the Kalahari—Maqua Pool—Immense flights—Yellow-throated and variegated Sand-grouse—Eighteen brace shot—Tough skins.

THERE are few more interesting groups of birds than the sand-grouse. They are singularly specialized in many of their characteristics, and seem created almost solely for an existence in wide and waterless deserts. They exhibit a curious mingling of two very different avi-faunal orders, and, from the very nature of their chosen haunts, their appearance and habits are little known to Europeans. Sand-grouse partake strongly of the characteristics of both grouse and pigeon; so strangely is this the case that even naturalists have been puzzled how to classify them. They resemble grouse in the

feathering of the legs and feet; some of them—as the yellow-throated sand-grouse—in the cry, and the under-colouring of the body; like grouse and other game birds they lay their eggs upon the earth, and the young birds hatch out clothed in a soft downy covering. On the other hand, their heads and the shape of their bodies are strongly pigeon-like, and their swift and sustained powers of flight much more resemble the pigeons than the grouse. They are indeed strangely balanced between those widely different orders, the *columbæ* and *gallinæ*. If we add that there is a slight trace of the plovers thrown in (sand-grouse have been occasionally mistaken for grey and golden plover), it will be conceded that the family represents a combination of singular attractions. The colouring of these birds is very beautiful, yet in general appearance it is so protective that when upon the ground, as they are for a great part of the day when feeding, it is a hard matter, upon a dry sun-baked plain, to distinguish them from the surrounding soil. Their powers of flight are immense, probably surpassing those of almost any other bird. They drink at desert pools and streams at night and morning, and during the day disperse over immense tracts of country in search of food—principally grass and other seeds, and berries. Their long and sharply-pointed wings, combined with a highly-specialized

muscular development, enable them to cover daily a very large expanse of country at an immense rate of speed. In the day-time they are scattered far and wide in pairs; at night and morning they resort simultaneously with the exactitude of clockwork to their distant watering-places, where they drink in bands of enormous numbers. Far though they wander in search of food, the exact timing of their drinking hour never fails; if each bird carried a twenty-guinea watch its punctuality could not be greater. As you travel by some stream of the wilderness towards sunset, or stand with outspanned wagons at morning between eight and ten, you may watch the swift and arrow-like flight of these desert birds as they speed from all quarters of the compass. Arrived at the water, they collect in dense flocks, circle round and round, swoop down, take their drink at the margin, and then again disperse. The sand-grouse is a welcome bird to the traveller. Many a time in penetrating parched and waterless country have the weary footsteps of the hunter and explorer been directed to water by the flight of these birds. Many a catastrophe to beast and man has been averted by these unerring guides. At such a time the sight of these swift creatures speeding over the hot waste, their forms showing dark against the red and orange sky of sunset, is worth more than a wagon-load of gold.

Sand-grouse are usually divided by scientists into two genera, *Pterocles* and *Syrrhaptes*. Of these the former are by far the more abundant, numbering as they do some fifteen species. The *Syrrhaptes* only include two species, both inhabitants of Asia, viz. the Tibetan sand-grouse (*Syrrhaptes tibetanus*) and Pallas's sand-grouse (*Syrrhaptes paradoxus*), the latter of which has become at certain intervals well known in England by its extraordinary migration hither. This genus, the *Syrrhaptes*, although much resembling the other members of the sand-grouse family, has a special development of foot, which renders it remarkable. This foot peculiarity consists in the encasement of the three anterior toes in a covering which has been very well compared to a "fingerless glove." The strange and sometimes abundant migration of Pallas's sand-grouse to Western Europe has never yet been reasonably explained. Probably an abnormal scarcity of food in its own Asiatic territories—it ranges usually from Northern China almost to the borders of Europe—has a good deal to do with these periodical incursions. This sand-grouse has invaded Britain, in recent years, in 1863, '72, '76, '88, and '89. The last invasion, 1888-9, will be long remembered by sportsmen and naturalists. Large numbers of these beautiful birds were seen and shot in many districts, as many as sixty having been counted in a single flock. At first they were

often mistaken for grey or golden plover, but when shot and handled, the sharp-pointed wings and tail and ochreous-sandy general colouring, tinted underneath with reddish-orange, easily distinguished them. In several localities pairs of these sand-grouse bred; but, I believe, no survivals of these interesting visitants are now to be found in England. Many hundreds were observed pressing in their strange migration westward, far beyond the coast of Ireland; there can be little doubt that most if not all of these wanderers perished in the Atlantic. As Pallas's sand-grouse, when in this country, was neither included among the game birds, nor sheltered by the Wild Birds' Protection Act, it fell a ready victim in all parts of the kingdom to the curious, the greedy, and the murderous gunner. Large numbers were shot as specimens and preserved. It seems, indeed, that nothing can save the rarer birds which in decreasing numbers make their homes in or migrate periodically to Britain. They are ruthlessly slaughtered to deck the hall of the town- or country-house, or to swell the collections of so-called naturalists. Bitterns, marsh-harriers, ruffs and reeves, bustards, crossbills, and other rare birds have small chance, now-a-days, of perpetuating their species in those islands. During its last great European migration (1888-89), Pallas's sand-grouse was observed as far north as the neighbourhood of Trondhjem, Norway.

The genus *Pterocles* is widely scattered over Asia and Africa. Two out of the fifteen species, *P. arenarius*, the common sand-grouse, and *P. alchata*, the pin-tailed grouse, are found in Europe—the first in Portugal, Spain, and Southern Russia; the second, in addition to these countries, is known also in the south of France. Here, curiously enough, it is commonly miscalled *Le Perdrix d'Angleterre.*

Besides these two species, which range from India to South Europe and the North of Africa, other five sand-grouse are found between India and Africa. One species only, *Pterocles fasciatus*, seems to be peculiar to Asia. The remaining eight members of this family (*Pterocles*) belong essentially to Africa, of which one, *P. personatus*, is found in Madagascar only.

In Southern Africa, that is in Africa south of the Zambesi, only four species are identified. These birds, however, are so numerous and so interesting that a sketch of their habits may be thought worth noting here. I have had some special opportunities of watching these sand-grouse, all of them beautiful, some rare and little known, in the deserts to which they attach themselves. Their habits, their colouring and flight, their machine-like punctuality, and the wonderful displays afforded by their enormous flights at desert pools, are a source of never-fading pleasure and contentment.

The only species of sand-grouse found in Cape Colony, south of the Orange River, is *Pterocles tachypetes,* known all over South Africa by the name "Namaqua partridge," long since erroneously bestowed upon it by the Dutch Boers. The "Namaqua partridge" is first found on the Great Karroo; thence, far and wide throughout the great plains, not only of Cape Colony, but of the far interior, it is to be seen at watering-places in the dry season in uncountable numbers. After crossing the Orange River the very beautiful double-banded sand-grouse (*Pterocles bicinctus*) begins to be found. There is little difference in the flight or cry of these two species. They are frequently to be seen mingled together at desert waters. The sharp incessant cries of the bands as they come in and circle round about the pools, the whirr and rustle of their wings as they swoop suddenly down in a body to drink and rise up again are things not likely to be forgotten. The "Namaqua partridge" drinks both at morning and evening, but as a rule is to be seen in stronger bands at morning than at evening. In my experience the double-banded sand-grouse drinks preferably at evening, though it may also be found in places mingling with the morning drinkers. At some few desert waters in the North Kalahari region I have found only double-banded sand-grouse drinking at sunset. These birds afford most excellent

flight-shooting as they approach the water. Their flight is marvellously rapid; they swerve and turn with incredible rapidity, and, in the swiftly-fading dusk of African evening, they require very straight powder to bring them down. Of course, when actually collected at the water, a man may make a great bag by shooting into the brown of these strong battalions—forty or fifty are sometimes secured with a right and left; but this, after all, is but a miserable form of butchery, which, as the birds are comparatively worthless for food purposes, cannot be too strongly reprobated. In the Kalahari, that vast tract of country still much of it unknown, which, although devoid of surface water, is by no means the desert it has been so long called, these two kinds of sand-grouse are recruited by two other remarkable species, the variegated and the yellow-throated sand-grouse. All four are to be found also in the more desert portions of Bechuanaland, Matabeleland, Mashonaland, and the Transvaal. In Damaraland and Ovampoland the Namaqua, double-banded, and variegated sand-grouse are well known, but the yellow-throated species seems never to have been discovered, even by so keen-eyed an ornithologist as the late C. J. Andersson. As a general rule the variegated and yellow-throated sand-grouse are to be more plentifully found in the dry wastes of the North Kalahari than any other region. The yellow-throated

sand-grouse, however, is by no means so abundant a bird as the other South African sand-grouse, nor does it appear at waters, even in the dry season, in such immense flocks.

In travelling across the northern portion of the Kalahari during the dry winter season, I had ample opportunity of observing all these charming birds at the scant watering-places to which they resort. Arriving one evening at the end of June at Maqua, a small desert pool of very foul rain-water, at this time rapidly vanishing by evaporation under an ardent sun, it was observed, curiously enough, that not a single sand-grouse came to drink. Great troops of doves, principally the Senegal dove—known to the colonists, from its curious human note, as the laughing dove—flocked to the water at sunset, but not a single sand-grouse. Next morning, while sitting in my wagon writing up my diary and waiting for breakfast, my hunting companion called out that the sand-grouse were just appearing. This was about 8 a.m. From this time for close on two hours many hundreds of sand-grouse—Namaqua, variegated, and yellow-throated—came pouring in from all parts of the horizon. They streamed in swiftly upon the air, the Namaqua and variegated species uttering incessantly their sharp shrill cries. The yellow-throated sand-grouse, which appeared in nothing like the numbers of the others, were easily picked out by their greater size, their dark under-

colouring, and the hoarse "glock, glock!" which they uttered as they came up and swept round the pool. The Namaqua and variegated sand-grouse average about 9½ in. to 10 in. in length; the double-banded is about an inch longer; while the yellow-throated is again a bigger and heavier bird of about a foot in length. The Namaqua and variegated sand-grouse mingled together freely as they came up, and circled incessantly round about the water at an immense rate of speed. Suddenly a combined band would swerve towards that end of the pool farthest from our wagons, and with one swoop of incredible swiftness descend upon the margin of the water. The loud rustle of their wings, as this manœuvre was enacted, was most remarkable. If not disturbed, the leading birds drank quickly and flew off, when others took their places; the watering process being gone through with perfect order and without over-crowding. If, however, my companion or I moved with our guns in that direction, the whole flight would rise with a loud whirr of hundreds of pairs of wings, and circle high in the air again about the pool, until a safer opportunity presented itself for drinking. The great yellow-throated sand-grouse held together in flocks of from a dozen to thirty or forty. They stooped together at the water and drank frequently. From eight o'clock till close on ten this wonderful flight continued; as birds drank and departed, others were constantly arriving to take their

places. I should judge that the average time spent by each bird at and around the water was from twenty minutes to half-an-hour.

It so happened that at Maqua Pool we found on arriving a family or two of Bushmen—the wild Masarwas of the desert—squatting there till the water gave out. These poor people were in a state of semi-starvation, as they often are. Some of the men were to accompany us giraffe hunting the next day, but meantime they all clamoured for food. My friend and I had small compunction, therefore, in shooting a number of sand-grouse for them. In less than two hours of fair shooting we killed eighteen brace, which the Masarwas immediately proceeded to devour, placing the birds, feathers and all, upon the fire, and eating them as soon as the plumage was well scorched. If we had fired into the main troops of the sand-grouse, as they dropped to the water, we could, of course, have slain far more. We merely aimed at birds as they circled swiftly above us. A good part of the time we sat at breakfast with our guns by our sides, jumping up, now and again, to bring down a bird or two. Towards ten o'clock the bands, which had been gradually lessening in number, finally dispersed; the last of the sand-grouse had drunk their fill for the day, and this beautiful desert scene was ended. Of these South African sand-grouse, the yellow-throated species is, as I say, easily distinguished by its greater size and

grouse-like voice, which my comrade very well likened to the cry of grouse as they make raids upon the corn-fields in autumn. The under-colouring of the male of this handsome bird is also very grouse-like —a deep chocolate-red. The female is more chestnut in hue in the under-colouring. The male bird is also notable for the sulphur-green of the neck and breast, the dark-brown gorget-like band upon the breast, and the Nankin-yellow of the sides of the head and chin. The variegated sand-grouse can be distinguished from the Namaqua, which it much resembles in shape and flight, by the clear white spots upon the upper and breast plumage, and the splashes of bright yellow upon the general olive upper-colouring. The double-banded species, again, can be told from the Namaqua by its larger size and the difference in the colouring of the breast-bands. In the Namaqua these bands are white and brownish-red; in the double-banded species white above, black beneath. All the sand-grouse, however, are very remarkable and very beautiful birds, and well deserve more notice and a closer acquaintance than they have hitherto obtained. The flesh is not very good eating, and we found the skin of these birds so exceedingly tough, that our specimens gave us far more trouble to prepare than any other birds shot during the expedition.

CHAPTER IV

RAMBLES IN BRITISH BECHUANALAND

Woodhouse Kraal—Beautiful scenery—Small game plentiful—Koorhaan-shooting—The veldt after rain—Duck-shooting—Red-billed Teal and South African Pochard—The home of the waterfowl—A White Stork shot—Bush Koorhaan——A brace of Vaal Koorhaan—Similarity in Bustards—Another expedition—Camp and supper—An early start—Quiet shooting—Senegal Bustard—Boer encampment—Plague of flies—Crimson-breasted Shrike—Other small birds—The "dikkop" Plover—A thunder-storm—Game laws.

ONE of the most charming spots in British Bechuanaland is Woodhouse Kraal, an oasis of bush, grass, and water, set beneath a lonely fragment of rocky and very picturesque hill, which juts abrupt and isolated from amid the spreading sea of plain. This place lies some eight miles east of Setlagoli, not far from the Transvaal border. At a few miles' distance, another bold ridge of rock—Koodoo's Rand—springs from the plain; and beyond Koodoo's Rand the greater hills of Kunana aid successfully, in this district, to break the endless monotony of the vast, rolling grass veldt.

Not very many years back all this country was

the favourite abiding place of much of the great game of South Africa. But since Sir Charles Warren's expedition, even the blesbok and the springbok have faded out, or nearly so, and only the steinbok and duyker among the antelopes are now certain to be found near the borders of the Transvaal and this part of Bechuanaland.

Woodhouse Kraal, however, from its combination of bush, water, and grass veldt, came to be known as an excellent and certain find for wildfowl, bustard, and other feathered game; and in the absence of better sport a good many gunners have had reason to bless this quiet oasis as a sure shooting-ground, affording pleasant days of sport. Besides duck, geese, bustard, and francolin, and the inevitable duyker and steinbok, Woodhouse Kraal and its neighbourhood often furnished a charming variety of small bird life. It was a capital place in which to potter about and quietly observe many interesting specimens of the up-country avi-fauna, and for this reason the place will always retain a nook in my memory.

Among the fairest valleys or oases in the vast rolling uplands (sometimes all grass, sometimes grass and forest) of British Bechuanaland, there rise to my mind Matlaping, Mosita, Brussels Farm, New Grennan, and others. With these, Woodhouse Kraal and its bit of characteristic, park-like scenery share a place.

It was in the early part of 1890 that I first cantered with two companions from Setlagoli to Woodhouse Kraal, to have a look round and try for a duck or two. It was a fine, clear afternoon, and we headed along the sandy wagon-track at a brisk pace straight for the kopje. We picked up two or three koorhaan (black and white bustard, *Otis afroides*) as we went along. These birds if anywhere near the road are pretty sure, with their harsh grating call, to give notice of the approach of man. They are very uncertain birds ; sometimes they will crouch or run only a little way, and on the approach of the gunner get slowly up within fair range with their abominable cackle. They are then easy victims for the gun. At other times they will run along the veldt, dodging behind every tussock of grass or bush with exasperating persistency, to get up at last well out of range. They then make a short circling flight, high up in the air, cackling and scolding, so as to disturb a mile or two of veldt, and go down again. Mr. J. G. Millais, in his delightful book, *A Breath from the Veldt*, has the best and most characteristic sketches of this handsome yet annoying game bird that I have yet seen. For some foolish and very unfair reason this bustard has been exempted from the close-time for game birds which has been proclaimed in Bechuanaland.

On the day I speak of, we wasted little time over

the koorhaans. If those found near the road gave us a fair chance, pretty quickly, we shot them; if they ran we abandoned them and rode on. Presently we were at the foot of the dark brown kopje of Woodhouse Kraal. Here we off saddled, fastened up our horses, and taking different positions entered the bush, with the object of converging on a pan of water where duck and teal were expected to be lying.

The scenery we entered upon was charming. There had been recent rains, the veldt grass was springing thick and green beneath our feet, the bush was at its best, and some thorn-trees gave to the glades through which we made our way the appearance of a small park. We were not long in reaching the first pan of water, from which rose at our approach four or five couple of wildfowl. A couple dropped to our first shots, and then in a minute or two, as they came circling round again on whistling pinions, two more fell. Two of the duck fell into the pan—a sheet of water perhaps one hundred yards by sixty; but as the afternoon was hot and a swim welcome, there was no grumbling, and for lack of a dog we were our own retrievers and spaniels. We had hoped to find spur-winged geese on the pan, but were disappointed.

Of the two couple of fowl shot here, three proved to be red-billed teal (*Anas erythrorhyncha*), quite

the commonest duck in Bechuanaland, and, indeed, throughout the interior; the odd one turned out, rather to my surprise, to be a South African pochard (*Nyroca brunnea*), a species not so common as the teal. The red-billed teal are fine water-fowl, between 18 in. and 19 in. in length, and afford capital eating. In this respect there is little to choose between them and the yellow-billed duck, also a common South African wild duck. Both are capital table birds, and make an excellent change at times to the flesh-pots of the up-country traveller. These and many other species of water-fowl find their head-quarters in the vast systems of the Lake Ngami, Chobi, Okavango, and Zambesi regions far to the north. When the rains descend in Bechuanaland and the countries to the southward, these water-fowl spread themselves over the land, and are to be found upon every periodical river, spruit, vley, and pan throughout the country. I never can forget the enormous masses of water-fowl seen during this year (1890) on the lagoons and shallows formed by the rising of the Botletli river during the dry winter season—the annual period of inundation in the Ngami region. The vast spreading waters were black with them, and their clangour and the roar of their uprising were things to be ever remembered.

Passing to the next pan, a steinbok was roused in thick covert. The active little antelope was

round a bush and away in safe sanctuary before a shot could be fired. At the next pan the only occupant unscared by the sound of recent firing was a great white stork which my friend Mackay quickly brought down as it rose majestically to escape. This handsome bird (*Ciconia alba*), figured in Gould's *Birds of Europe*, with its whitish plumage, orange-red bill, and pale red legs and feet, is not so often seen in Lower Bechuanaland, except when the rains are at hand, and the river and pans full. Further north in the lake and river regions it is plentiful enough.

We wandered for a short while further through the glades and thickets beyond, picking up one bush koorhaan (*Otis ruficrista*), a very handsome bustard common in the bush and forest region of the interior. In the brief notices of this bird I have never seen remarked the curious purplish-pink colouring with which the soft, fluffy under portion of the body plumage is suffused. This colouring is very remarkable, but like the very similar hue of the crest, fades greatly after death. The pinkish inner tinge contrasts singularly with the intense black of the outer plumage on the stomach of this bird.

There appeared to be no further prospect of wildfowl this evening, and as dusk was approaching we made our way back to our horses, mounted, and rode off. We had not long quitted the bush and

gained the open veldt when a brace of Vaal koorhaan were seen in the long grass near the road. Jumping off and softly approaching them, my companions secured both birds as they rose. The Vaal koorhaan (*Otis scolopacea*), a very handsome bustard, somewhat larger than the black and white koorhaan, enjoys a wide distribution in South Africa. Not only is it found upon the karroos of Cape Colony, but also in the Orange Free State, Transvaal, Bechuanaland, the Kalahari, and, I believe, Damaraland. Although widely distributed, it is not so plentiful as *Otis afroides*, and in some districts seems to be absent altogether. There appears to me to be a great similarity in the habits of this bird (and especially in its corncrake-like call) and of the Rüppell's bustard (*Otis rüppelli*) of Wahlberg and Andersson, said to be found in Namaqualand and Damaraland. Can there be any confusion in the species? The breast and belly plumage of the Vaal koorhaan is glossed with a beautiful pinkish hue, which unhappily usually fades to white after death. I have, however, quite recently seen a skin brought home by Mr. J. G. Millais, in which the pinkish body colouring is much more retained.

Having fastened up the brace of Vaal koorhaan, we proceeded on our way, and cantered home quietly through the lovely African evening, reaching

Lamb's Hotel and Store at Setlagoli in time for supper. Black and white bustards were crowing here and there loudly as we passed along; and, nearing Setlagoli, the sharp call of a covey of Orange River francolins was to be heard, as they made their way to some drinking-hole in the river bed. It was some few weeks later that I again visited Woodhouse Kraal. This time there were five of us, and we arranged to camp out for the night, rise early, and have a try for guinea-fowl down a thickly bushed watercourse, now dry. As usual, we rode across, bagging a few Vaal and black and white koorhaan by the way. These, split open and spatchcocked over the hot ashes of the camp-fire, served, with some steaks of good Bechuanaland beef from a native ox, and a kettle of coffee, to provide a capital supper; after which, and a pipe or two, we rolled ourselves in our blankets—toes to the fire —and went to sleep just as the moon rose over the darkling kopje behind us.

At 4 a.m. we were stirring, the fire was replenished, some coffee made, and then we started away in different directions. Somehow that day the guinea-fowl evaded us, and we never succeeded in finding more than one solitary brace. There had been no rain for some time, and a storm was slowly brewing. The day was intensely hot, the usually sparkling atmosphere of these plateaux

lands, so vigorous and bracing during the dry winter months, was conspicuous by its absence, and the game bagged that day was well and hardly earned. I marched down the dry watercourse for some miles with my companion and a dog, hoping to come across guinea-fowl. In this we were disappointed. We occasionally picked up an Orange River francolin, or a black and white koorhaan (*Otis afroides*), and one bush koorhaan fell to my gun; but sport on the whole was disappointing.

Speaking of bustard, I should have mentioned that one of the koorhaan shot the evening before rather puzzled me. It struck me, in the brief cursory examination I had of it, as bearing a strong resemblance to the Senegal bustard (*Otis senegalensis*) described in Layard and Sharpe's *Birds of South Africa*. There seemed a good deal of the Vaal koorhaan about it, and yet to me there were differences, especially in the bluish colouring about the throat and breast. I quite meant to have saved the skin of this bird, but, unfortunately, before I returned to camp, it had been plucked, cut open, and spatchcocked. I have the strongest impression that this was a scarce koorhaan, and most probably the Senegal bustard.

The African bustards, and, indeed, all the game birds of the interior, are in my opinion by no means clearly or fully known at present. In a recent

book, *Gun and Camera in Southern Africa*, I have described the game birds of Bechuanaland and the adjacent countries as far as they are ascertained; but I am strongly of opinion that the list is not by any means yet complete. Mr. J. G. Millais returned in 1894 from a very interesting expedition to South Africa; and among his specimens were skins of a bustard shot by him in the north of the Transvaal, which looks very like proving to be an entirely new species. In my judgment, the bustards north of the Orange River are least well known of all the African game birds, and require to be far more clearly established than they are at present. Here is an opportunity for some enthusiastic sportsman-naturalist!

The day grew rapidly hotter, and sport did not improve. Towards eleven, seeing a Boer encampment some little way off, we turned that way, hoping to get some milk. Alas! there was very little to be had. I never saw flies much thicker or more troublesome than at this encampment; the near presence of a cattle kraal sufficiently accounted for the plague. The Boers are not over particular on such points, and are content to fence their kraals far too near their houses or wagons for comfort. There was a very pleasant young Dutch vrouw here and a pretty child, but the flies smothered everything; wagon, horses, dogs, woman, man, and child were

covered with them. Eager to escape from the fly nuisance, my shooting friend and I bade the Boers farewell and departed; he to try a round back to camp again, I to potter about on my own hook.

There were some large thickets hereabouts in which I espied a good many interesting small birds. I therefore sauntered leisurely along, having taken the precaution to exchange a charge of dust-shot for one of my No. 5 cartridges. Amongst other birds I found here several pairs of the extremely handsome crimson-breasted shrike (*Laniarius atro-coccineus*), first discovered by Burchell, and procured one or two specimens. The crimson colouring of the breast and lower parts of this shrike is one of the most brilliant things in bird life. I found here, too, the southern white-headed shrike, which I have observed in small flocks in many parts of the interior.

Many other small birds I noted during this morning's ramble (one or two of which I shot); among them the most prominent were, perhaps, the South African hoopoe, some of the beautifully-tinted Burchell's glossy starlings (*Juida australis*) with their wonderful metallic plumage, some yellow weaver-birds (*Ploceus mariquensis*), and, as I approached the kopje, nearing camp, a fidgety wheatear, undoubtedly the well-known "familiar" wheatear (*Saxicola familiaris*). This wheatear is pretty widely found all over South Africa, and relishes

man's society so much as to enter houses occasionally by the open door or window, In this respect it resembles the Cape swallow, which builds its nest fearlessly and very frequently inside the living rooms of Boer farmhouses. While crossing the plain on my way round to the rocks of Woodhouse again, I shot one more black and white koorhaan and a dikkop.

The dikkop (literally "thick head," a Boer name, evidently bestowed from the rather abnormal development of that part of the bird's anatomy) is a plover (*Edicnemus capensis*) closely related to the Norfolk plover or thicknee of our English avi-fauna. It is usually found in pairs in open or thinly bushed veldt, and, as it is a good table bird, generally forms part of the game-bag of the South African gunner. It moves abroad mostly after nightfall, and when put up during the daytime, falls, from its slow, laboured flight, an easy prey to the "scatter gun." The Norfolk plover itself is sometimes met with in South Africa, but is of far more rare occurrence than the widely distributed spotted thicknee or dikkop which I had first shot.

I climbed the low, rocky hill on my way to camp, and had a fine view over the vast sea of plain and the adjacent hills of Kunana and Koodoo's Rand. In spite of the oppressive heat, I had had a very pleasant ramble. Our united bag that day was,

however, a poor one—seven or eight brace only; quite one of the poorest I remember in Bechuanaland, if the number of guns be counted. For this I think the intense heat and impending storm had mainly to be thanked. The clouds were rolling up ominously, so that we put together our belongings, and rode for Setlagoli with what haste we could.

We were too late. The storm of rain broke upon us, with its usual South African accompaniment of tremendous lightning and thunder, before we reached Setlagoli, which we gained in a pretty drenched condition.

It may be well here to point out that a close season for game birds (including, curiously enough, the dikkop plover, as well as sand-grouse, wild duck, wild geese, and snipe—but excluding the black and white bustard, or koorhaan) prevails throughout British Bechuanaland from Sept. 1 to the end of February. Owing to the vast area and scanty population of the territory, however, this law is not obeyed, I fear, as well as it ought to be.

CHAPTER V

NOTABLE SOUTH AFRICAN BIRDS

Richness of the avi-fauna—Birds of prey—Game birds—The Secretary Bird—Birds devoted to animals—Migratory birds—Familiar European friends—Rainy season—Breeding plumage—Swallows—Rollers—Bee-eaters—Sun-birds—Wheatear—Wagtails, Pipits, Thrushes, Warblers, and Chats—"Jan Fredrik"—Babblers—Orioles—Flycatchers and Larks—Shrikes—Crows—Starlings—Weaver Birds and Finches—Bullfinches—Touracos—Hornbills—Parrots—Woodpeckers—Cuckoos—Trogons and Pigeons—Storks, Cranes, and water-fowl.

RICH as South Africa has proved itself in the nobler forms of animal life—those countless beasts of chase now, alas! vanishing so rapidly—its great host of birds forms a kingdom in its way quite as interesting, and, apparently, quite inexhaustible. Let the traveller go where he will in the vast veldt of Southern Africa—over mountain, through bush, or across plain—he will, if he has any eye at all for the charms of nature, see around him at different seasons, an infinite variety of bird-life with which to interest and amuse his leisure hours.

It is true that Africa cannot vie with England in

its choir of songsters—no tropical country can—yet the African avi-fauna is by no means quite devoid of song birds. In beauty of colouring many of the birds of South Africa can vie with any part of the world—except, perhaps, the Malay Archipelago—the sun-birds, kingfishers, bee-eaters, cuckoos, rollers, and even some of the finches can here offer examples of gorgeous beauty hardly to be surpassed anywhere. In its birds of prey this land is prodigally supplied. Seventy species at least are represented; and when one sees everywhere the eagles, hawks, falcons, and owls, all fiercely striving for a living, one marvels where the supply of food for such a multitude can come from.

In game birds South Africa is peculiarly rich. Guinea-fowls, francolins (the "partridges" and "pheasants" of the colonists), bustards, and sand-grouse are all abundantly represented, and the up-country wayfarer owes many a welcome meal to their presence.

The curious secretary bird (*Sagittarius secretarius*, the "Slang vreeter"—snake-killer—of the Boers), that puzzle to scientists, still stalks the veldt with ludicrous solemnity, and beyond the Orange River is found in plenty. In Cape Colony of late years it has considerably decreased in numbers. Always a knotty problem to naturalists, from its peculiar blending of accipitrine and bustard-like

characteristics (some say it is allied to the cranes), the "Secretary" still stands proudly apart from its fellows, and is classed in a family of its own—the *Serpentariidæ*.

Among peculiar and odd forms of bird life familiar in South Africa may be mentioned the honey-guides, weaver-birds, hornbills, rollers, jacanas, shrikes (the butcher-birds of the British school-boy), and others, very many of which display in countless forms habits that will afford inexhaustible pleasure to the true lover of natural history.

Some birds in Africa have acquired fame and interest as the constant attendants and friends of large animals. Thus the buffalo is constantly attended by a kind of starling, the *Buphaga africana*, or its near relation, the *Buphaga erythorhyncha*, which rid the great beast of ticks and other insects; and by sharp cries and restless movements warn their big friends of danger when the hunter approaches. The same bird, the *Buphaga*, similarly attends the rhinoceros, and undoubtedly is often the means of saving that huge but poor-sighted quadruped from death or danger. Another bird attendant on the buffalo is one of the finches, the buffalo weaver-bird (*Textor erythorhynchus*), a gregarious species which nests in colonies in a single tree. Another, Smith's helmet-shrike (*Prionops talacoma*) has a penchant for Burchell's zebra, and, so the

natives say, is its frequent attendant. It has certainly been discerned riding on the back of that handsome beast. The tiny three-collared plover (*Ægialitis tricollaris*) again is called the sea-cow bird from its friendship to the hippopotamus or sea-cow, with which it is often found associating. The spur-winged plover (*Hoplopterus armatus*), to cite another instance, has, at all events in South Africa, been identified since the days of Pliny as the friend and ally of the crocodile. There was long a doubt upon this point, but of late years it has been conclusively proved that this striking plover, with its black and white plumage, noisy cry, and hatred of man, does enter the open mouth of the reptile and perform some service—whether by freeing it from leeches or other parasites is not quite clear. It is certain that the plover implicitly trusts the crocodile, and will even allow it to enclose it within its jaws for a short time. The saurian on his part never seems to take advantage of his position. I am not aware that this habit has been reported from South Africa, where the spur-winged plover is widely distributed; but undoubtedly within the last three or four years it has been fully established on the Nile by competent observers, and Pliny's reputation for truthfulness, long maligned, is thus once more confirmed.

Another bird, sometimes seen in company with, and even perched upon the backs of buffalo, in

pursuit of ticks, is the beautiful little egret, one of the most striking of the heron family.

It is always an intense pleasure to the sojourner in the far-distant African veldt to see about him some bird with which he has been familiar at home. The habits of migratory birds have been by no means clearly established down to the present—I mean their nidification in the various countries they visit, their halting places and periods, and other details of their strange existence. But that certain birds do migrate from the extreme south of Africa to Northern Europe and thence back again has long been well known. The English wanderer in the interior of South Africa, then, may expect to be occasionally cheered by the sight of such familiar home friends as the cuckoo, the chimney-swallow, the sedge warbler and the willow warbler, the spotted flycatcher, the waterhen, little grebe, and eared grebe, as well as the grey plover, turnstone, little stint, sanderling, redshank, curlew, and others of the *Scolopacidæ*. Probably also that very beautiful and remarkable wader, the avocet (*Recurvirostra avocetta*), with its slender, long, upturned bill, and the stilt or stilt-plover (*Himantopus candidus*), the ruff (*Machetes pugnax*), one or two of the herons, the white stork, and some of the plovers, besides those I have mentioned, pass systematically between South Africa and Europe.

The season of rains, the period of South African summer—from December to March—always brings a great accession of bird life to the south of the great continent. This is the time to observe habits, and procure and identify species. During this season the breeding plumage is assumed, and the garb of many of the smaller birds wonderfully enlivened. Some of the changes are of quite an extraordinary nature. One remarkable example may perhaps suffice. The male of the orange-shouldered bunting (*Chera progne*) suddenly assumes, for the breeding season, a tail of tremendous length. This long black sweeping tail, combined with the bird's jet-black body plumage, set off by velvety shoulder-knots of intense scarlet (or, in the young male, rich orange), give a most striking appearance to this bird. So long and so heavy are the tail-feathers that the birds can scarcely fly; they rise from the grass, struggle with clumsy, laboured flight for a short while, and then go down again. In very wet weather they are quite helpless. I have seen these birds very abundantly in South Bechuanaland, and never failed to be amused by the ludicrous helplessness produced by this assumption of courting finery. Others among the great family of *Fringillidæ*, or finches, notably some of the weaver-birds, widow-birds, and waxbills, assume in the males a gaudier colouring, and often greatly increased tail plumage,

during this season of the year. Swallows and swifts are pretty numerous, there being eight or nine species in South Africa, though only one (the pretty fawn-breasted martin, or Cape swallow) remains throughout the year.

The rollers—so called from their curious rocking flight, which has been very well compared to the motion of a boy's kite when falling to the ground—are very brilliant and remarkable birds. They are common in the great park-like acacia forests of the interior. The colonists invariably miscall them blue jays, probably from their colouring. One species (*Coracias caudata*) is sometimes known as Moselikatse's bird; for the reason that the redoubtable founder of the Matabele nation often adorned his head with the long tail-feathers. The flashing plumage of these birds exhibits an almost impossible blending of wonderful violets, greens, pale and dark blues, lilac, and rufous, and yet is indescribably beautiful. These rollers are great hawkers of flying insects, especially of butterflies. During the progress of a grass fire they may be observed in large numbers, mingling with the smoke, and flashing hither and thither in pursuit of prey driven out by the flames.

The bee-eaters are perhaps the most gem-like of all South African birds. Even the most brilliant kingfishers can scarcely vie with them. Always found

near water, usually amid thick vegetation, they flit hither and thither, sparkling flashes of colour that never fail to delight the eye. Usually they build in the banks of a river, or near water, some few feet inwards. The European bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*) is well known, and appears to exist chiefly on a kind of wasp. The wasp or bee is invariably seized cross-wise, presumably to avoid the sting, and then, after a careful squeezing, is swallowed. One of the tiniest and most beautiful of these birds—the rufous-winged bee-eater—I found on the Botletli river, Ngamiland. The colours include rich yellow on the throat, then bands of bright blue, white, and black; beneath these a patch of chestnut; green upper parts, and rufous wings. The wonderful *Merops bullockoides*, with its crimson throat, green back, buff head, bright blue rump, and electric-blue stomach, is another exquisite species which I procured on the Limpopo; but, indeed, all are perfect marvels of colouring.

The sun-birds, or sugar-birds as the Cape colonists call them (which are the Old World representatives of the New World humming-bird), are also famous for their brilliant colouring and the gorgeous metallic sheen of their plumage. As their colonial name implies, these birds are extremely fond of sweet food, which they procure, with their long, slender, curved bills, from the Protea, orange-tree, and other trees and shrubs which bear flowers producing saccharine

matter. Some of the most remarkable of these birds are the Malachite sun-bird, double-collared sun-bird, Andersson's sun-bird, a small but very lovely species, the magnificent orange-breasted sun-bird, and others. Some of these species have a very sweet song, notably Andersson's sun-bird (*Nectarinia anderssoni*), which the late C. J. Andersson described as producing "exquisite and enchanting melodies" during the pairing season.

Passing over, with some regret, a number of very interesting small birds, among them some sweet-voiced warblers, one halts at a rather remarkable wheatear, the imitative wheatear (*Saxicola pileata*), well known in South Africa by its Dutch name "schaap-wachter" —sheep-watcher. This is a most impudent and amusing fellow. Not content with a fair song of his own, he mimics almost every note he hears, and will imitate, not unsuccessfully, birds, dogs, sheep, goats, and other creatures. He is little afraid of man, and has apparently a natural fondness for sheep and other stock, for which reason the Boers gave him his colonial name.

There are some twenty wagtails and pipits already known in South Africa; while thrushes, warblers, and chats number just upon fifty.

Another bird fond of man's society, and inquisitive and even impudent in its nature, is a chat-thrush (*Cossypha caffra*), christened by the Boers "Jan Fredrik." This is a well-known bird in Cape Colony,

and has a rather pleasing song, the notes of which the Dutch have likened to "Jan-fredrik-drik-drik-fredrik," and for short "Jan Fredrik."

Babblers are a numerous family, numbering, according to Trimen, thirty-seven species.

The only orioles are the Cape oriole (*O. capensis*); the well-known golden oriole of Europe (*Oriolus galbula*), which is occasionally seen in the interior during the rains; and another very beautiful species, the *Oriolus notatus*, also rather a scarce bird.

A notable bird is the musical drongo shrike (*Dicrurus musicus*). With a very clear and pleasing voice, this bird possesses great boldness. Not only will it drive birds of its own size from its neighbourhood, but it will fiercely and successfully attack large hawks and falcons.

Flycatchers and larks comprise twenty-two species, among which the familiar European spotted flycatcher, and a remarkable white-tailed fly-catcher (*Platysteira torquata*), the largest of its race, together with the Sabota lark (*Alauda sabota*), and the noisy clapert leeuwerk (so called from the loud clapping of its wings as it rises from the plain in a short flight), the *Megalophonus apiatus*, are to be noted. No African larks possess the glorious song of the British skylark, or anything approaching it.

Shrikes are numerous, of eighteen species. Remarkable among them is the Fiscal shrike (*Lanius*

collaris), so called from his well-known butchering habits. The old Cape Dutch likened the slaughtering propensity of this fierce bird to an old-time official of theirs, the Fiscal or Crown prosecutor, by whom criminals were brought to justice. The larder of this bird, and of its near congener, the coronetted shrike (which replaces it in Bechuanaland), is quite a curiosity, including, as it does, beetles, locusts, small snakes, mice, lizards, and other luxuries, all neatly impaled on acacia thorns or aloe spikes.

The common crow in South Africa is not black, but black and white. There are two kinds, both very familiar figures—one known to the colonists as the bonte kraai (pied crow) (*Corvus scapulatus*), and the other called the ringhals kraai (ring-neck crow) (*Corvus albicollis*), a big, bold fellow, constantly seen about the colonial roads and outspans. The only black crow (*Corvus capensis*), the korenland kraai (cornland crow), is far less known, except near cultivated land, where he may be seen following the plough for dainties after the manner of his English congener.

The glossy starlings are very numerous and very striking denizens of South Africa. The effect of their wonderful metallic sheen and the variety of colouring of the male birds' plumage, flashing under the strong sunlight, is most beautiful. Blue, violet, purple, puce, green, bronze, brown, black, and white are all blended and represented. Verreaux's glossy

starling (*Juida leucogaster*) and Burchell's (*Juida australis*) are good examples.

Weaver-birds and finches there are of forty-six species. Some, as the yellow fink weaver (*Hyphantornis capensis*), yellow reed finch (*Pyromelana capensis*), and the scarlet reed finch (*Ploceus oryx*), are of extremely handsome colouring, The white-browed weaver-bird (*Plocepasser mahali*) sings occasionally during the rainy season and very beautifully. But the chief interest among these birds lies in their wonderful nests—some hung dependent from a single slender swaying branch overhanging a river or watercourse; some beautifully fastened to two or three reeds; some built among spreading trees. All are marvels of patient and ingenious work. The large, hollow, grass-woven nests are perfect examples of the most fairy-like basket-work. How, one asks oneself, can it be done? The well-known social weaver-bird (*Philetœrus socius*), a small brownish species, which builds a huge, rick-like nest of grass among the branches of the giraffe-acacia tree, was exceedingly abundant in the forests round Setlagoli, British Bechuanaland. I saw a good deal of their interesting colonies, in which order and good feeling seem to prevail. The huge nest is umbrella-like in form, flat underneath, and pierced with many holes, in which these feathered republicans make their nests.

Amongst two or three bullfinches, the yellow bullfinch has a very melodious voice, and claims a place among other Cape songsters. South Africa boasts a few sparrows, one of which, the Cape sparrow (*Passer arcuatus*), answers in many respects to the familiar nuisance of Europe.

The touracos (*Musophagidæ*), sometimes called plantain-eaters, are peculiar to Africa. A familiar one, on nearing the Tropic of Capricorn, is *Schizorhis concolor*, a plain drab-coloured bird, strongly crested, which invariably salutes the presence of man by a loud-screaming "quah-quah!" Many a head of game is lost to the hunter by these annoying birds.

The hornbills—quaint, ugly, and bizarre, with their monstrous bills of yellow, red, or black—are very interesting. They are commonly found among woodland, and especially in acacia forests. A remarkable habit, in some species of this family, is the plastering up by the male of the hen bird (which selects a hole in the tree for nidification) during her period of laying and hatching out. Only a small aperture is left, through which the cock bird assiduously feeds the hen and her family.

Parrots are not strongly represented in South Africa. North of the Orange River, one of the prettiest and most familiar is Rüppell's parrot (*Psittacus rüppelli*), which is often to be seen in Transvaal farmhouses, and makes a tame and confiding pet.

Blue, green, and yellow are the principal colours of this charming little parrot. The presence of this bird is an infallible sign of water; and few sounds are more welcome to the traveller than its shrill cry.

Nor are woodpeckers so numerous as in some other countries. Perhaps the charming little Cardinal woodpecker (*Dendropicus cardinalis*), recorded by Le Vaillant in his voluminous way more than a hundred years since as *Le petit pic à bagnettes d'or;* and another bird, *Laimodon nigrithorax*, brilliantly garbed in scarlet, black, green, yellow, and brown, well known in the Transkei territories and Natal, may be cited as the most notable species.

Cuckoos are well represented, and include some ten or eleven species. Of these three at least are true "indicators," or honey-guides. It seems to be pretty clear that the curious habit of these birds in leading the traveller to bees' nests is undertaken from at least as much desire to obtain the grubs of the wild bees as the honey. No doubt the honey is to some extent eaten, but the grubs are the main attraction. None the less, the habit is a most remarkable one, and it would be curious to know how and when it was first developed in the far-distant ages of Africa. Klaas's cuckoo (*Cuculus klaasii*), the golden cuckoo (*Chalcites smaragdineus*), and the little Didric cuckoo (*Chalcites auratus*), all well known in the woody parts of Cape Colony, are among the most brilliant birds in Africa.

The latter, with its wonderful commingling of metallic emerald-green and gold, is a much-coveted trophy of the bird-hunter.

The Trogons and some of the pigeons—especially the Namaqua dove and the emerald-spotted dove—are remarkable; and there are some notable forms among the herons and kingfishers.

Coursers and plovers form an interesting group, and are found in plenty throughout the country. I have touched upon those birds in chapters VII. and IX.

Storks and cranes, flamingoes, pelicans, ibises, coots, jacanas, rails, and many other water-loving fowl, add to the abundant beauty and diversity of the South African avi-fauna. The wildfowl alone—those vast armies of duck, geese, widgeon, and teal, which are to be found in countless flocks upon the great water systems of the interior, and, during the rains, at most of the vleys and waters scattered about the whole country—are in themselves a source of special delight for the naturalist.

In truth, the bird life of South Africa is a vast and almost inexhaustible subject, the outworks of which have barely yet been penetrated. Here, indeed, lies a rich and, as yet, very ill-explored field for the lover of nature who can devote time and labour to systematic and steady research.

CHAPTER VI

GUINEA-FOWL SHOOTING

Welcome birds—Excellent eating—Sport in British Bechuanaland—A covey at rest—Shooting with the pointer—Swainson's Francolin—Abundance of Guinea-fowl in the interior—A troop of a thousand—Favourite food—A sight at sunrise—How to get among a covey—Methodical method of drinking—Running habits—Treeing Guinea-fowl—Shooting the roosters—Ambulatory powers—A prolific species—Domesticating wild chicks—Other species of Guinea-fowl—Plumage used for feathering arrows—Tendencies of tame birds.

THERE is no more welcome game bird in the veldt of Southern Africa than the guinea-fowl, and the sharp, metallic voices of a flock calling to one another at sundown, as they are gathering their bands for the nightly roost in some tree at hand, is an intimation that no hungry gunner can possibly resist. The young of the common South African species (*Numida cornuta*) are by far the tenderest and best-tasted of African game birds, and a stew even of old birds is by no means to be despised. When men are sharp-set and short of food, it matters little to them whether their flesh-pots are supplied with a due

regard to sporting etiquette or not. And I am afraid there are few Englishmen who have travelled in the African interior who could plead "not guilty" to the charge of having, at some time or another, fired into the thick of a troop of guinea-fowl, as they sat roosting together in some tree at night, in order to provide a good meal or two for themselves and their party.

But there are also many days when the guinea-fowl can be followed in a more appropriate and sportsmanlike manner. And, especially after the rains fall, when grass and vegetation are thick and covert is good, the gunner, with the aid of a dog which understands this game, can enjoy some very pretty sport. Along the banks of the Setlagoli river in British Bechuanaland covert was abundant, and we could usually reckon on picking up a few brace of guinea-fowl—besides other game—if we rode that way.

One fine South African winter morning I rode with a friend up the Setlagoli to call on some neighbours. The road ran from our huts on the Maritsani through a picturesque bit of country, well grassed and densely timbered with giraffe acacia. Between the road and the Setlagoli—for most of the year a mere dry, sandy watercourse, with an occasional pit of water here and there—a thick growth of thornbush, interspersed with trees, offered excel-

lent shelter for guinea-fowls; the bulbs and roots of which they are so fond were plentiful; and we were pretty certain of finding these fine birds somewhere in this locality. On our way home we came across unmistakable traces of a small flock of guinea-fowl—the ground was freshly ploughed up in their eager search for their favourite bulb—and presently Lassie, our pointer, getting well on the scent, we got off our horses and very quietly followed her. The pointer crept so quietly among the birds (now taking their mid-day rest) that they were cowed, and, the troop being mostly young, the old birds refrained from running off at twenty miles an hour, as they too often will do. Lassie now stood rigidly at point, and at length, as I moved forward, an old bird got up within ten yards and shortly fell an easy victim to my right barrel. The South African guinea-fowl is a lusty, heavy bird—a good deal bigger than his English relation—he is not a quick riser, and is one of the easiest of feathered objects to shoot, if you can but make him leave the earth. Thirty yards further on another old bird got up, and she, too, was secured. Meanwhile, not far to my right, Mackay had got among some of the youngsters, and, walking them up as they squatted terror-stricken, was not long in securing a brace and a half.

Presently Lassie, who had been quartering among some thickish bush nearer the river, put up another

youngster, which flew to a tree, and, thence setting off at my approach, was brought with a thud—for these fleshy birds fall by no means lightly—to the earth. We ranged about, hither and thither, in the long grass, but it was evident that the rest of the birds had plucked up heart of grace and run for it, and, as we had now what food we wanted, we pursued them no further.

Mackay also flushed and secured a large red-necked francolin close to the river-bed, and, having regained our ponies and fastened the game to our saddles, we moved quietly for home. These red-necked francolins, which proved to be of the species known as Swainson's francolin, were occasionally found along the Setlagoli (they are seldom found south of that river), but were never abundant. They are large, coarse-looking birds; the general colouring is of a dirty brown, the throat is bare and of a dull crimson colour. This is a large, heavy game bird, approaching the size of a blackcock, and, with perhaps the exception of the Cape "pheasant," is the heaviest of the South African francolins; but it is poor eating, and quite the plainest member of this otherwise handsome family. We never found these birds except in pairs or singly, and always near thick covert, and not far from water. They are called by the colonists "pheasants," are fond of trees, and invariably roost at night among the

branches. Like the other South African "pheasants," they have a screaming, noisy call.

Although plentiful in British Bechuanaland, the guinea-fowl becomes for more abundant in the less frequented districts of the interior. At early morning near the Botletli river I have seen flocks of some hundreds gathered together in the winter season, and even near Maqua Pool, in the dry, desert country of the North Kalahari, I saw strong bands. As these desert pools fail, the birds congregate near more permanent waters, and are then to be seen in astounding number. The late C. J. Andersson mentions having seen more than a thousand gathered in one spot. The Bushmen of the Kalahari have various methods of taking them, and having carefully extracted the crops, which are usually crammed with small bulbs, dear alike to these children of the desert and to many of the game birds, they carefully skewer them on a stick, and hang them up to dry against a day when flesh is inaccessible. I have tasted these bulbs; they have a sweet, nutty flavour. They may be considered the Bushman's bread when other food is scarce; a European would find them but a poor stand-by, I am afraid.

It is a wonderful sight to come at early morning in the desert upon one of these huge bands of guinea-fowl, congregated together during the dry season near some pool or fountain. I shall never

forget seeing a large troop containing two or three hundred birds soon after sunrise one morning in the North Kalahari as we were riding out into waterless country to hunt giraffes. My friend and I caught sight of them just as they appeared in the open from out of a broad fringe of bush. We had a long and careful survey of the band as they moved over the open ground. As we had neither dogs nor shot-guns with us, and were intent on other sport, we let them go undisturbed.

On another occasion I came across a very large troop in the waterless forest country—principally giraffe acacia—some twenty miles south of the Botletli river. Here again I was armed only with a rifle, and in pursuit of a troop of giraffes. Sometimes, with a dog that understands the business, it is possible to get right among a good covey of guinea-fowl. When thus taken by surprise by the dog they will lie very close and afford capital shooting. I recall vividly getting in this way among a band of guinea-fowl upon an open flat between the Setlagoli river and Mosita. The birds lay like stones in the long grass; we had a couple of pointers with us and the sport was excellent. Sometimes, too, the birds may be surprised while resting in the heat of mid-day under some shady giraffe acacia, so that with the help of a pointer, the gunner secures a bit of good shooting.

Speaking of the immense gatherings of guinea-fowl near small desert waters, Andersson, a very close observer, describes the methodical way in which these birds go to work at drinking-time. "It is quite evident," he says, "that were such a mass of birds to make a simultaneous rush for the precious liquid, there would be much confusion, and comparatively few would be able to have their fill. But, on the contrary, they go to work most economically and judiciously, and it is very interesting to watch the process. The first-comers enter the well or hole, as the case may be, and, rapidly and dexterously taking their fill, they make their exit in a different direction, if possible, from that by which they entered; in the meanwhile the outsiders gradually and evenly approach, and the ring is narrowed by a steady progressive movement of the whole. A batch of fresh-comers never attempt to force their way among those which have previously arrived, but remain quietly on the outside of the ring until their turn comes."

We had good sport with guinea-fowl along the Maritsani and Setlagoli rivers until well into the winter season, when the grass became thinner and more parched, the covert more scanty, and game generally wilder. The guinea-fowl, always pretty alert, then became excessively wild, and, catching sight of us in the open veldt, would run almost as

fast as a dog. Until one has seen the pace of these birds in the wild state, one can hardly realize the extent of their running powers. It is perfectly hopeless to get near them on foot if they once start running. In forest country we sometimes employed a mongrel dog with a good nose, or a badly broken pointer which was good for little else. If we came on a troop of guinea-fowl, these dogs would run them till they scattered and took refuge in trees. The dogs would then bay them until we came up, when we could usually reckon on a brace or two as they flew off. This is a recognized method, and indeed when guinea-fowl run in forest country it is about the only way of getting near them. Sometimes when run down and scattered by the dogs in this way they will lie very close and can then be shot in detail. On such occasions good bags can be made.

Farther up country, on the Lake river (Ngami-land) we were usually too much occupied with the pursuit of heavy game to find time to follow guinea-fowl. They were, however, very plentiful in all that region; and occasionally, when it happened that a flock had settled for the night in some trees near our camp, at the entreaty of our wagon-boys we would lend one of them a gun and two or three cartridges for the purpose of stalking the sleepy roosters, and so ensuring a supply of delicate food for the morrow.

Thanks to their ambulatory powers, guinea-fowl range over an immense distance during the day in search of food. From twenty to thirty miles a day is not an extravagant estimate in desert regions where water is scarce. As a general rule, they drink once in twenty-four hours; but in the cooler season of African winter I am inclined to think they will go without water for a longer period. Several times while hunting in the dry forest region some distance south of the Botletli river, I have found these birds late in the afternoon—nearly at sundown, in fact. I doubt greatly if these bands could possibly drink that night; as a rule they may be found nearing water towards sunset. One night, just as I was prepared to camp beneath two isolated trees on the fringe of this forest region, at least fifteen miles from the river, I disturbed a troop of roosting guinea-fowl with which the two small trees were literally packed. Undoubtedly these birds had not been to the river that evening, and would probably not visit it till the afternoon of the next day. In the forest itself there was not a pool or pan of water of any sort, and only game capable of sustaining life for long periods without water, such as giraffe, gemsbok, hartebeest, and koodoo, permanently ranged there. From the immense numbers of these birds to be seen in the districts where they have not been persecuted by gunners,

it is manifest that they are a highly prolific species. The nest is nothing more than a shallow depression in the ground, and the number of eggs vary from a dozen to twenty. The colour is a creamy buff, very minutely speckled.

Instances are not uncommon where the young are reared from a setting of wild eggs placed under a hen. But it is well known that the roosting habits of the youngsters are as great a trouble to the foster-mother as are young ducks reared under a hen, when they first take to water. Some friends of mine in British Bechuanaland, while out shooting one day, captured a number of wild chicks not long hatched. These were safely brought to the homestead, and subsequently reared.

C. J. Andersson, however, mentions that he had never known an instance of wild guinea-fowl thus domesticated rearing a brood of their own. This is a curious circumstance, if properly established; and I should much like to hear if any South African colonist can point to a case in refutation.

In addition to the South African guinea-fowl of which I have been writing (*Numida cornuta*)—a much handsomer bird than its tame congener—other species are found in South-East Africa and along the Zambesi—viz. the *Numida cristata* of Pallas (also found in West Africa), first discovered by M. Verreaux, and the Zambesi guinea-fowl (*Numida*

pucherani), both very dark birds, carrying bluish and not white spots, and having black, feathered crests. It is, perhaps, worthy of note that the Zambesi natives—Barutse, Mashukulumbwe, Batoka, and others—who affect bows and arrows a good deal, make constant use of the blue-spotted plumage of this last guinea-fowl for feathering their arrows. You will hardly ever see arrows from this region upon which these guinea-fowl feathers are not employed. I have in my possession some fine Mashukulumbwe arrows, all carrying the notable blue-spotted feathers of Pucheran's guinea-fowl. These tribes make and use very excellent bows and arrows. The bows are long, strong, and powerful; the arrows long, well-feathered, and with the heads (of native iron) beautifully and curiously barbed.

In other parts are to be found the curious Vulturine guinea-fowl (Eastern Africa), the Abyssinian guinea-fowl, and Rendall's guinea-fowl from West Africa. Madagascar produces the mitred guinea-fowl (*Numida mitrata*). These birds, however, interesting though they are, hardly come within the scope of this chapter. How is it, I wonder, that the guinea-fowl in a state of domestication is so prone to throw out white feathering upon the breast and wings? Even with the tame guinea-fowl, so often seen among Dutch farmers in Cape Colony, this is the case. Yet in the wild guinea-fowl one

never by any chance sees a single instance of white feathering. The guinea-fowl of European farmyards sprang, of course, originally from African stock—most probably from South African. In colouring and characteristics it resembles the wild Cape guinea-fowl, which I have been describing, more than any other species. The South African bird is, however, bigger, heavier, darker in plumage, and with the white spots more prominently displayed —altogether a much finer bird. I have a strong impression that the introduction into England of the hardy and prolific wild South African species would tend greatly to reinvigorate and add weight and flavour to our domesticated bird. The importation of a few hundred pairs would be by no means a difficult or expensive operation, and would vastly improve the present farmyard breed.

CHAPTER VII

SOUTH AFRICAN COURSERS

Desert birds—Habits—The violet-winged Courser—Beautiful bird—Description and habitat—Shooting in the South Kalahari—Excellent eating—Size—Double-banded Courser—Habits and description—Heuglin's Courser—Burchell's and Senegal Coursers—Appearance and habits—Protective colouring.

Of the great family of plovers, few species are more noteworthy than the coursers. Yet it seldom happens that these singular birds are mentioned in any book of travel or sport. The coursers may be described as true lovers of the desert. They are always to be found in dry open country, where their long legs and great ambulatory powers serve them in good stead, while the general sandy colour of their plumage serves to conceal them from observation. Although, from their migratory instincts, nearly all these birds must of necessity often take long flights, they are, when undisturbed, seldom seen on the wing. Once they have alighted in their migration upon some chosen stretch of country, they seem

to rely entirely upon their running and walking powers. Even when followed and disturbed by the gunner, they will trust, if possible, to make good their escape by quick running, or, as in the case of the bronze-winged courser, by lying concealed in the long herbage, and only rise upon the wing as a last extremity. And even when thus forced into the air, they seem to have great objection to a long flight, and quickly go down again.

Of all the coursers—indeed, I may say, of all the plovers—the remarkable violet-winged courser (*Cursorius chalcopterus*) is, to my mind, the most beautiful. When first I shot a specimen of this very handsome bird, and had it in my hands, I thought I could never tire of looking at it. The first point that, of course, attracts attention, is the wonderful shining metallic violet of the wing-tips, from which the bird takes its name. The pale desert-brown of the upper colouring serves admirably for concealment in the country over which the bird ranges. The breast is of a lighter shade, strongly marked by a neat black band. The throat, under-parts of the body, and rump are clear white. The long slender legs, of a brilliant red, and the reddish-orange ring round the eyes impart just the requisite touch of colour to this exquisite bird. The wing-quills are black, tipped, as before described, with iridescent violet. The head of this bird is strongly plover-like, and the

general shape is very elegant, far more so, indeed, than the only two plates of which I know would imply. These plates are to be found in the works of Gray and Temminck. They are fairly correct in drawing, but they entirely fail to convey the wonderful natural beauty of the bird. I should note that in Gray's work the legs of this bird are coloured yellow instead of red, which they ought to be. Although this courser is of wide distribution, I do not think it can anywhere be very common. It is only sparsely found in South Africa, between the Zambesi and the Orange rivers. In Cape Colony I do not think it occurs at all. More to the eastward, in Natal, it has, according to Mr. E. L. Layard (*Birds of South Africa*), been identified by Mr. Ayres.

Mr. Seebohm, in his excellent monograph on the *Charadriadæ*, says of the violet-winged courser, that it is "found from Senegambia almost to the Red Sea, and near to both coasts in South Africa," and that it probably occurs in tropical Africa. Its general distribution is undoubtedly very wide, but I have never heard of this courser being found south of the Orange River. It is, however, I think unquestionable that the bird passes to and from the north and south of the continent, and is therefore to be found at times in tropical Africa upon suitable ground. It first appears in South Africa at the commence-

ment of the rains (November or December), and migrates as the season becomes more advanced. C. J. Andersson states that the bird arrives in Damaraland in a moulting condition, or when about to change its plumage, and for this reason, on its first arrival, keeps exclusively to covert. Later on it certainly becomes distributed in more open country.

As I have said, the violet-winged courser is nowhere common in South Africa. During fifteen months spent north of the Vaal river, in 1890-91, during which I traversed a very large extent of country, and was constantly on the move, I only saw it in one district of the South Kalahari portion of British Bechuanaland. It was towards the end of the rains, in the month of April, when travelling with a wagon to Morokweng, that I first came across these birds. We had outspanned at Kudunque, between Mosita and Morokweng, where the true Kalahari country may be said to begin. This is a very dry trek, and we were delighted to find a good pool of rain-water in a big limestone basin.

Kudunque is a shallow depression or "laagte," as the Boers call it, which runs nearly due north to the Molopo river, or rather course, for hereabouts the Molopo is nothing but a sand-bed, quite destitute of water. Close to the water-pit at Kudunque, which is quite dry during the winter months (May to November), is a large brack-pan, whither heavy

game, such as gemsbok, hartebeest, ostrich, and occasionally koodoo, still resort to lick the salt limestone. In the afternoon, before outspanning, my friend Dove shot a violet-winged courser, the first we had ever seen. It was in splendid plumage, and we could not sufficiently admire this beautiful bird and the wonderful iridescence of its violet-tipped wings. Next morning, in pottering about after Orange River francolins ("partridges"), bush quail, and other food for the pot, we put up more of these birds. My friend Mackay and I each shot a specimen or two. We afterwards found a few nearer Morokweng. Whenever we met with these coursers they lay extremely close, and got up almost under our feet. They seem unwilling to fly far, and go down at no great distance, when, after running some little way with much swiftness, they again lie with extraordinary tenacity. Our pointers found them and put them up just as they did partridges and bustards. We skinned our captures carefully; the flesh, which was excellent eating, went into the stew-pot with other game. From May till the following year I never saw these coursers again, although wandering in suitable country for them in many parts of Bechuanaland, the Kalahari, and Ngamiland. It is most probable, I think, that they only make a stay of a few months in South Africa, and then migrate elsewhere to the northward.

This is the largest of the South African coursers, measuring some 10 in. to 11 in. in length, with a wing measurement of 7 in. to 8 in. Mr. Seebohm has an interesting theory regarding the bronze wing-tips of this bird. He suggests that the metallic colouring probably indicates its affinity to the lapwings.

The double-banded courser (*Cursorius bicinctus*) is a little inferior in size to the last-named. It has a much wider distribution. I found it years ago on the Great Karroo of Cape Colony, and, on my last expedition to South Africa, I met with it again in Bechuanaland. It has been found in several parts of Cape Colony and Natal, as well as in Great Namaqualand, Damaraland, Ovampoland, and other regions of the interior. The colouring of the dorsal plumage in this bird is a blend in which rufous is the most conspicuous. The feathers are lightly marked with black down the shafts, the tips are whitish, the breast and stomach are pale rufous, the throat creamy white. Between the breast and stomach occur the two black bands from which this courser takes its name. The lower part of the stomach and rump are white. The legs, too, are whitish. Mr. E. L. Layard, in the excellent notes to his *Birds of South Africa,* mentions a singular trick of this bird and of Burchell's courser, which is, I think, common to all the South African coursers. It is certainly possessed by the violet-winged and Senegal

coursers. Of this habit Mr. Layard remarks: "They (Burchell's coursers) have a curious habit of swaying themselves to and fro on their long thin legs when halting after a run, as if they had overshot themselves and were trying to recover their balance." From my own observation, I have little doubt that Mr. Layard's surmise exactly hits the fact, and that the swaying habit is merely part of a steadying process after the swift runs in which the coursers so frequently indulge.

A very rare South African courser is Heuglin's courser (*Cursorius heuglini*), first identified by Von Heuglin, and figured by him in the *Ibis* (1863, p. 31, pl. 1). Von Heuglin's specimen was obtained at Gondokoro, on the White Nile, and was for some time the only example recorded, until that indefatigable naturalist, the late C. J. Andersson, obtained two specimens at Ondonga, in Ovampoland, South-West Africa. This latter pair was for some time in the collection of Mr. J. E. Harting, who writes concerning them: "This appears to be an extremely rare species. . . . I cannot see that it is generically distinct from *Cursorius*, any more than the better known *C. chalcopterus*." Mr. J. H. Gurney, who edited the late C. J. Andersson's *Birds of Damaraland*, is of opinion that this rare courser stands intermediate between the *chalcopterus* and *bicinctus*, an opinion which most naturalists will be inclined to accept.

I have never seen this courser in South Africa, where its occurrence must, I think, be extremely rare; nor have I ever heard of a specimen being shot since Andersson's time (1867). It is worthy of note, as instancing the migratory instinct of this species, that Andersson found it in Ovampoland in the month of January, the middle period of the rains in this part of South Africa.

The two remaining species of courser found in South Africa are Burchell's courser (*C. burchellii*) and the Senegal courser (*C. senegalensis*). These bear a very strong resemblance to one another, and are often scarcely to be separately identified when seen running along the plains, upon which they invariably have their habitat. Burchell's species is, however, much the commoner bird, and is found all the year round in nearly every open part of South Africa, from the Karroo northward. There is little to choose in size between this species, but the Senegal courser may be identified by its stronger rufous colouring, and by the more pronounced black patch in the centre of the belly-feathering. If anything, the Senegal courser is inferior in size. In South Africa these birds are, I fancy, seldom, if ever, separately identified. The Senegal courser is, like its near congener, *C. burchellii*, a bird of extremely beautiful colouring. The rufous head and neck, clear white and black half ring crowning the head behind the

eyes, the delicate rufous-fawn plumage of the upper and under parts—springbok colour one might call it—so well harmonizing with the desert sands over which these birds love to course; the black wings tipped with white, the ashy rump and nape, tail neatly barred and tipped in black and white, and the snowy chin, thighs, and lower part of the belly, all unite to add peculiar beauty and distinction to this elegant little courser.

Burchell's coursers range about the great open plains with amazing swiftness. They are more common, and run in greater numbers than any others of their kind—I have seen as many as fifteen in a band—yet, from the protective nature of their colouring, they are, when in repose, extremely hard to pick out. They seem to me to be more difficult to force into flight than almost any other bird, and trust almost entirely to their legs for safety. As the fleet and elegant springbok seems, among mammals, exactly created to adorn the great plains and karroos, so, among birds, Burchell's courser, a true child of the desert and the sun, is peculiarly suited to the flat and parched solitudes upon which it is always found.

Of the five known South African coursers which I have attempted to describe, all are extremely interesting. The development of these plover-like birds, their singular adaptability to their desert surroundings, their great powers of locomotion, yet,

amongst most of the species, strong migratory instincts, and the elegance of their dress and carriage, all tend to recommend them heartily to the lover of avi-faunal life. South Africa has, indeed, among all her treasures of feathered life, few more interesting creatures to exhibit than the coursers.

CHAPTER VIII

A STREAM IN CAPE COLONY

Floods and droughts—Sea-cow holes—Doves and Pigeons—The Cuckoos—Honey-guides and Honey—Canaries and Kingfishers—Weaver-birds—The Bush Lory—Its renewal of colouring—Wading birds—Hill shooting—The neglected Cape—Vast tracts unknown—Mountain interiors—Great game—Pleasant backwaters—Flower life—A playground for future generations.

A LITTLE river, which rises in the south-east angle of the Great Karroo, ran through the mountains past the stony slope on which our rude flat-topped dwelling was pitched. When the thunder-rains fell and the Karroo was drenched, this river raved in a great body of turbid, reddish-yellow water, through the poort or pass that fronted us, and thence, issuing from the hills by another poort miles beyond, it hastened to join the Groote or Gamtoos river.

From that junction the combined torrents poured down the lower slopes of the colonial coast region and wasted themselves with fruitless fury in the Indian Ocean. These ebullitions are, however, of scant occurrence, and are quickly over. An annual

rainfall of but 12 in. to 15 in. can seldom afford them. During the long months of the dry season our river appeared usually in a chain of pools, which lay beneath the mountain rocks. In the seasons of severest drought even the biggest of these pools disappear, or become so brackish that the very fish sicken and die. Yet the floods come round in time, and the fish somehow return to their old haunts.

In normal seasons one might usually reckon on some few good pools along the stream, and for this reason, no doubt, bird and animal life was always pretty abundant with us. In the Cape Colony, as in so many parts of Africa, there is still steadily going forward a slow process of desiccation. When the frontier Boers first entered these wild kloofs and valleys at the end of the last century, and began their long warfare with the fierce Bushmen who then inhabited them, our stream was much bigger, and held in its deeper reaches many hippopotami. These reaches, or "Zee-Koe gats" (hippopotamus holes), as they are called, could now-a-days scarcely afford bathing room for these unwieldy monsters; yet they serve to attract and sustain much bird life, and are therefore very welcome to the naturalist.

On quiet days, when the rifle was laid aside and the shot-gun carried, it was an infinite pleasure to stroll down the watercourse and watch by some

favourite pool. Whichever way one sauntered, the deep kloofs and valleys and the savage masses of mountain were full of beauty—sometimes soft and peaceful, at others wild and inexpressibly forbidding. In the more open valleys the flat alluvial bottoms near the river favoured a growth of thorny acacias, thick groves of which at spring-time put forth a bravery of yellow plush-like blossoms, and filled the warm air with sweetest perfume. In these groves the pleasant cooing of throngs of doves was always to be heard. Many of the Cape doves and pigeons are very beautiful. In our valley the handsome Bush dove, the Olive dove, the sweet "Laughing" dove, the Damara dove, and that beautiful and diminutive creature, *Æna capensis*—the "Namaqua duif" of the Boers—were almost certain to be found.

Towards Christmas-time the promise of the rains brings many a notable bird of plumage south. That great army of the cuckoos, which flocks to the very shores of the Indian Ocean during this season, sent its heralds and stragglers even to our remote valleys. By our stream, and in the deep jungly kloofs around, were to be seen, resting and recruiting from their weary passage, the dark-plumaged "Noisy cuckoo," with white barred tail—"Le Coucou Criard," Le Vaillant, the old French naturalist, calls it—the Solitary cuckoo, and that perfect little gem of colour, the Didric cuckoo, conspicuous by the melancholy note

from which it takes its name, and by its shining coat of cupreous green. Klaas's cuckoo, resplendent in green and white, and the wonderful Golden cuckoo were, too, often to be noted on their way to the forests of the Knysna and Zitzikamma—their favourite haunts in Cape Colony.

The "Nieuwjaarsvogel" (New Year's Bird) of the Cape Dutch, a handsome dark, almost black, cuckoo, curiously barred with white across the wings, was to be seen last of all. As its name implies, this cuckoo hastens south about the time of New Year. Then, too, we had with us the little honey-guides, those strange feathered friends (also numbered among the cuckoos) which insist—not entirely from disinterested motives—in conducting mankind to the nests of bees. We ourselves had small need of them. Our valleys swarmed with bees, and the supply of honey in the caves and rocks around us was inexhaustible. When we required it, our Kaffir servants brought in the sweet stuff literally by the bucketful. The European cuckoo seems scarcely to come quite so far south as the Cape Colony. At all events its presence has not been noted there. Yet in Damaraland, not so very far north, it is known as a visitant.

The Berg canary and Cape canary, both pleasant songsters, red-headed and other larks, rock-thrushes, waxbills, and many other small birds, added life and interest to our landscapes. Among birds of

plumage, the gorgeous sun-birds, kingfishers that flashed in wonderful radiance up and down our streams, and glossy starlings with shining, iridescent feathering, were ours to admire.

Here and there, pendant over the watercourses, or curiously fastened to the reeds, were the daintily-fashioned nests of weaver-birds. The handsome yellow Kaffir fink was one of the most striking of these weavers. Another was the magnificent red fink, which, in its breeding plumage, is scarcely to be excelled for beauty. The upper colouring, of the most intense scarlet, the breast and belly of glossiest black, offer a very striking contrast. Out of the breeding season, the males, which alone put on this handsome livery, degenerate to a plain brown, a colour which the poor unadorned female always retains. In our deepest and bushiest kloof another very perfect bird of plumage crept secretly about the thickets. This was the bush lory (*Trogon narina*), a rare bird, whose wonderful scheme of colour—green and brightest carmine—made one burn to possess it. This is the bird which, according to Verreaux, has the faculty of renewing the brilliant crimson of its under-colouring, when washed out by rain. A ramble along such a stream, indeed, with the warm sweet air about one, the bright sun overhead, and the wealth of flowers and of feathered life apparent everywhere, makes, to the lover of nature, ample compensation

for the lack of little refinements and the roughs and tumbles of up-country life.

It is impossible here even to hint at a hundredth part of the wild life about our little river. Perhaps of all those far migrants from Northern Europe the wading birds are most interesting. We had with us at times various plovers and snipes, stints and sandpipers. Some of these birds undoubtedly nest within or near the Arctic Circle, and yet in their almost incredible migration manage to reach the Cape. Surely this instinct of migration is one of the most wonderful things in all nature? Of these graceful waders, I think the beautiful avocet, with its dainty black and white plumage and long, slender, upturned bill, was the most welcome in our valley.

Did we require sport or a dinner of venison, the mountains around gave us that freely. The Vaal (grey) rhebok furnishes as good stalking as a man can wish for; the active klipspringer, sprightliest and most handsome of mountain antelopes, the true chamois of South Africa, is not to be excelled for hill shooting, though you must climb far and shoot steadily to bring him down. And the flesh of this antelope is very capital eating. Upon the more open of our hillsides we could reckon upon a decent bag of grey-wing partridge—francolin they are more rightly called. Sometimes a couple or two of wild duck, or widgeon, or big red-billed

teal, or even a great Egyptian goose—when water was abundant—gave variety and interest to the bag.

Even the man who has tasted the delights of sport and travel among the great game and in the pathless veldt of the far interior of South Africa, can yet recall with the kindliest pleasure the quiet hills and valleys of the old Colony. For the more modest sportsman and the field naturalist there are few pleasanter places to wander in. It is passing strange that while the hunter, the trader, the pioneer, and the prospector press feverishly northward, the Cape Colony—the "old Colony," as all South Africans call it—lies beneath the cold shadow of neglect. The slow-moving Boer sticks to his old acres and is content, and the long-settled British farmers, forming the backbone of the Eastern Province, still steadily prosper. But much of the younger blood joins, and will continue to join, the northward torrent, and it is difficult to see how, in the years to come, Cape Colony is to be kept moving, unless new settlers and fresh blood are introduced from Europe.

Within the last fifteen years the Cape railways have opened up great districts, yet the land is so vast and distances are so immense that huge portions of the Colony lie to this day as remote, almost as unknown, as in the year 1806, when the British finally took possession of the soil. In the arid north-

west one may find vast tracts of country as silent and as purely desert almost as the Kalahari itself. In the forests and jungles of the southern coast region wild elephants and buffaloes still wander in troops protected by Government; while in the east and south-east there lie immense stretches of bush-veldt and leagues of mountain interior, as little disturbed by the foot of man as the most ardent lover of pure nature can desire.

These mountain interiors of the Cape Colony offer some of the wildest and sublimest scenery to be found in all Africa. Here, upon inaccessible cliffs and rugged hills, still finds shelter that rare beast, the true or mountain zebra, an animal now becoming very scarce. This quadruped (*Equus zebra*) gallops the mountain, and climbs from steep to steep with as much ease as his cousin, Burchell's zebra, speeds across the grass plains of the interior; and seen, as he is only to be seen, in the wildest and remotest mountain solitudes of the Cape, there are few more interesting studies for the naturalist. The koodoo, that prince of antelopes, still lingers in the bush-veldt of the Eastern Province. The rheboks, grey and red, and the klipspringer, true mountaineers all; the bushbuck, the duyker, the steinbok, the grysbuck, the dainty oribi, and the tiny blaauwbok are all still to be found. And upon the wide Karroo plains, once thronged with a variety of great game,

now sprinkled with the flocks of the sheep, and goat, and ostrich farmers, the fecund springbok still roves in some plenty. The lion has long since gone, but the leopard is much harder to dislodge, and yet haunts almost every mountain chain. Game birds, wildfowl, birds of plumage, legions of raptorial birds, all these throng the earth and water, and the great void of sky. In the south and south-east an amazing wealth of flowers is to be found. Yet the land lies to this day almost unknown to the outer world. For a hundred men that cross the Orange River and hurry breathlessly to the gold-fields, the diamond-fields, or the far-off hunting veldt, not one turns aside and wanders quietly through the much more picturesque, and at least as interesting, country of Cape Colony. Even the globe-trotter and the average pleasure-seeker looks askance at the poor old colony, and tears by train and post-cart over the hackneyed route that he has set himself to accomplish. Most of these people form their impressions of the old Colony from the parched and wearisome Karroo plains over which the railway carries them. They have no knowledge of the glorious mountains, kloofs, and bush-veldt which they have left behind. For the man of peace and the true lover of nature perhaps all this is just as well. It is pleasant to find in unexpected corners little backwaters which the roaring tide of extermination has left in peace,

places of nature where the remnants of a mighty fauna may yet be seen.

For the ornithologist, the quiet gunner in search of game birds, or wildfowl, or small buck, the lover of flowers and scenery, or the man seeking the purest air and the healthiest climate in the world, there is no better country than the Cape Colony. When the rains fall, the open valleys and the deeper kloofs become, as by magic, carpeted with wild-flowers. Pelargoniums grow in thick masses middle-high beneath the rock walls. Irises, gladioli, ixias, amaryllids, and other bulbous flowers star the earth; heaths, orchids, strelitzias, cotyledons, heliophilas, hibiscus, plumbago; all these and a hundred others lend beauty to the valleys or the hill-slopes. Flowering shrubs abound. The wealth of flower life at the Cape is, indeed, indescribable, except in the ample catalogue of the professed botanist. The late Miss Marianne North has painted many noble specimens of Cape flowers, yet she has left, perforce, a hundred equally as beautiful undepicted. The Cape as a place of resort for those seeking to escape the rigours of English winter has only lately been discovered. It deserves to be far more widely known than it is at present. Here, indeed, in a thousand lovely yet neglected spots, lie the playgrounds and pleasaunces of future generations.

CHAPTER IX

PLOVERS AND THEIR PECULIARITIES

Eyes and no eyes—Plover habits—The Lapwing—Hated by Covenanters—The spur-winged Plovers—Annoying ways—The Kiewitje and its habits—Grey Plover—The Killdeer—Dotterel—Ringed Plover—The Locust-bird—Wonderful methods of destroying locusts—Sea-cow bird—British plovers known in South Africa—The Rain-bird—Other South African plovers—The wattled, Caspian, Heywood's, and Kitlitz's plovers—Moquin's Oyster-catcher—Probability of discovery of new species.

In these whirling days, few people find time to stop and consider the ways and habits of the many interesting creatures that surround them. A sprinkling of enthusiastic naturalists, the more thoughtful among sportsmen, and perchance one in a hundred of the tourists who throng river, and mountain, and loch during their brief vacations—these are the only folk who have eyes and ears for the thousand and one interesting traits even of the avi-fauna of their own land. And yet, as every true lover of nature knows, there is a world of pleasure to be got out of a little quiet observation even in the fields or

hedgerows or moors within reach of our great cities. At the present moment, for instance, in the meadows between Hampstead and Hendon, within five miles of seething London, the green plover, the kestrel, and other birds are constantly accessible to the observant eye.

The plovers, an interesting and widely distributed group of birds, as well known in South Africa as they are in Britain, have some peculiar habits which distinguish them from all feathered fellows. And of these habits one of the best known and commonest is their trick of simulating lameness, and displaying extraordinary antics, in order to draw off the passer-by from the vicinity of their nests and young. The common green plover, or lapwing, is an excellent exponent of these antics—none better, indeed, in the whole family. This handsome bird—the peewit of the English, peesweep of the Scotch, dix-huit of the French—enjoys an immense geographical distribution, and is to be found not only all over Europe, but also in North Africa, and in Asia, as far even as far-off China. Besides its trick of diverting attention from its eggs and offspring, this plover has another singular habit, shared with other members of the plover family, a habit of teasing and crying at —almost of threatening—human beings. In the grim and dangerous days, when the Covenanters met in conventicle upon the desolate hill-sides and lonely

mosses of their country, this plover is said to have not seldom guided by its presence the soldiery in search of these stubborn worshippers. And for this reason the Covenanters and their descendants long nourished a peculiar hatred of the bird. So late did this antipathy exist, that Sir Walter Scott, in his time, remembered the Lowland shepherds destroying the nest of the green plover whenever found.

Personally I can sympathize to some extent with this ancient detestation, for the reason that, in the far interior of South Africa, I have met with a plover of equally annoying habits. Wandering along the banks of the Botletli river in the Ngami country in search of wildfowl, I have been so pestered and annoyed by the species known as the spur-winged plover, that at last, in a rage, I have raised my gun and shot one or two of my tormentors. These birds seem to have a strange hatred for the human form. They have excessively sharp, ringing voices—from which they take their native name, "Setula T'Sipi," or "iron hammer"; and, especially if one carries a gun, they greet the hunter with the most noisy and incessant cries, scolding perpetually, and swooping and dashing in quite a combative manner often close to one's head. These scolding tactics are by no means peculiar to the nesting season. Naturally they disturb the fowl of the vicinity, as seems to be their object; and the

gunner, as I have said, sometimes driven to desperation, at last turns upon the feathered plagues, and wastes a charge or two of shot upon them. This plover, sometimes called the "blacksmith plover," from the metallic ring of its voice, is a handsome species, garbed wholly in black and white; the curious sharp spur upon the point or shoulder of each wing, from which it takes its other name of spur-wing, distinguishes it readily from all its family. It is seldom found far from water.

There is another South African plover, the wreathed plover, or well-known "kiewitje" (the diminutive of "kiewit," a name manifestly adopted, like our English "peewit," from the cry of the bird) of the Dutch Boers, which shares in a lesser degree in the noisy habits of the spur-wing. This beautiful bird is found throughout the length and breadth of South and South-Central Africa, and its shrill, mournful cry is one of the best-remembered night-sounds of the wilderness. The spur-wing is usually found in small flocks, seldom exceeding half-a-dozen members. The kiewitje often flies in bands of from twenty to forty, and the sight of a human being is pretty certain to call up a chorus of sharp cries from the noisy creatures. They do not, however, pursue the traveller with so inveterate a hatred as the spur-winged plover, and indeed are often to be found in constant attendance round the hut or

farmhouse of the colonist. This habit is probably merely a selfish one, as the presence of flocks and herds and of grain increases the sources of food-supply. For this reason also the kiewitje is no doubt so frequently found in the neighbourhood of old cattle kraals. On the other hand, it is as often as not found in the heart of the desert, far remote from water. This plover, from its "lapwing" flight, its chiding cry, and malingering habit (in nesting time), much resembles its European congener, the green plover.

That cautious and suspicious bird, the grey plover, a scarce plover in Britain now-a-days, is another well-known inhabitant of Southern Africa, where, however, its plumage is always of a much lighter hue than in Europe.

A plover of North America, the killdeer, is another of the family which has a harsh and chiding voice. This plover is very abundant on the prairies, where it seems very well to represent the peewit of England and the kiewitje of South Africa, and upon the approach of human beings at once proceeds to lift up its voice in a querulous and impatient wail.

The dotterel (so called from its supposed stupidity),[1] or dotterel plover, although once pretty common in Britain, is now but an occasional visitant.

[1] Dotterel is merely a diminutive form of dotard and doitard.

Of old there was a curious legend—very generally accepted among country-folk—that this bird faithfully imitated the movements of the fowler, and so usually ended by becoming snared in the nets. So widely accepted was this idea, that Drayton in his *Polyolbion* has several lines descriptive of the dotterel's silly ways. And Bacon says of it: "In catching of dotterels we see how the foolish bird playeth the ape in gestures." The idea probably arose from the plover-like habit of feinting and tumbling in the air close to the fowler's head, in which way, possibly, an occasional bird ensnared itself. The dotterel plover, by the way, is, unlike others of its relatives, not a South African visitant.

The ringed plover or ringed dotterel, a well-known British shore bird of small but extremely handsome form and marking, which is found as far south as the Cape of Good Hope, is also noticeable for its clever use of stratagems to divert the passer-by from its nest; its sharp note of alarm and suspicion is characteristically plover-like.

One of the most useful members of the great family of plovers is Nordmann's Pratincole (*Glareola nordmanni*), a species belonging to the sub-family of *Glareolinæ* or *Pratincoles*. This bird, a great favourite among South African farmers, seems to exist solely for one object—that of destroying or helping to destroy the devastating swarms of

locusts. It is well known in Cape Colony and the interior as the small locust-bird — "Klein Springhaan-vogel" of the Dutch farmers. When these birds appear, they are looked upon as a pretty sure sign of approaching locust flights; and when the locusts pass over the country, darkening the air as they fly, devouring every eatable piece of vegetation as they descend, and bringing temporary ruin over immense tracts of ground, the locust-birds attend them literally in tens of thousands, killing and devouring their prey in incredible numbers. Their attack is always made upon a settled plan; and a vast ring of insects having been enclosed and devoured, the insatiable birds press on again for the main swarm, never ceasing in their attentions till night falls upon the scene. The digestive powers of these useful pratincoles are marvellously rapid, and their bills are peculiarly adapted for their work. As the locust is captured, the wings are neatly severed, and fall to the ground; and it has been stated by a competent observer, that in the case of a vigorous attack by these birds upon a large swarm, the "passer-by sees a continual shower of locusts' wings falling to the ground." These most excellent birds are seldom or never destroyed, and so well do they seem to understand their immunity, that they view the near approach of man with almost absolute indifference. Great

as is the havoc wrought by locusts in South Africa, in varying cycles, their ravages would be immeasurably magnified but for the unwearying exertions of the feathered armies of the locust-bird. The upper colouring of these birds is ashy-brown with a greenish tint; the wing-feathers are black; the throat is creamy white, the breast ashy. A gorget or collar separates the neck and breast. The stomach is snowy white; the legs, eyelids, and cere are red. In length the bird averages a little under a foot. The tail and wings are sharply pointed.

Another singular South African plover is the tiny treble-collared plover, the sea-cow bird of interior hunters. This diminutive little creature—only about six inches long—is neatly arrayed in brown upon the upper parts, black and white underneath; upon the throat appear the three distinctive collars, first of black, then of white, then of black again. Sea-cow, or, in Boer-Dutch, zee-koe, is the colonial name for the hippopotamus; and the treble-collared plover takes its colonial designation (sea-cow bird) from its frequent habit of attending the unwieldy Behemoth. Running about the back and head of that amphibian, picking off insects and other odds and ends, this little plover seems perfectly at home, while the sea-cow apparently accepts its offices in good part. This friendship between wild and often

fierce quadrupeds and small birds is, as I have elsewhere pointed out, of common occurrence in Africa and other countries. The sea-cow bird—unless when actually in attendance upon its big friend—betrays none of the jealousy or restlessness at the sight of mankind so often noticed in other members of the family; and I have had no trouble in approaching quite closely to the birds as they fed fearlessly in the shallows and upon the mud-flats of African "vleis" and rivers.

Besides the grey plover, the Norfolk plover or thick-knee, the Kentish plover, the common turnstone, and the ringed plover (previously mentioned)—all birds of Great Britain—are found in Southern Africa. The well-known golden plover of England has been also cited by Dr. Hartlaub as a denizen of South Africa. Its occurrence seems, however, to have been exceedingly rare, and, personally, I have never set eyes upon a specimen between the Cape and the Lake Ngami country. This bird, by the bye, takes its scientific name—*Charadrius pluvialis*, the "rainy plover"—from its wild, restless habits just before the approach of heavy rains and storms. There seems little doubt upon this point. The very name plover is derived from the old French word *plovier*—modern French *pluvier*—which manifestly had something to do with a rainy origin. Whether because some members of the family were supposed

to foretell by their disturbed, restless cries and habits the approach of storms, it is hard at this distance of time to say. Curiously enough, the German name for plover is *Regen-pfeifer* (rain-whistler); so that the rainy connection of the bird would seem to be an idea of wide geographical distribution.

In addition to those species I have noticed, other remarkable plovers are to be found in South Africa. Among these are the South African wattled plover (*Vanellus lateralis*), a larger plover, found during the rains in small flocks upon the lake and river systems of Ngamiland, and occasionally in other regions. The Caspian plover (*Charadrius asiaticus*) is also sparingly found in small bands during the wet season—December to April—in widely separated parts of the country. This bird is more usually found in non-breeding plumage, but a few specimens have been procured in full courting finery.

Heywood's plover (*Charadrius marginatus*), a charming bird of diminutive size—about seven inches in length, pale brown and white in colour—is very frequently met with in many parts of South Africa, especially along the coast. Kitlitz's plover (*Charadrius kitlitzi*), another of the tiniest of the plover family, measuring only a trifle over six inches in length, is found from Damaraland to the Cape.

Moquin's oyster-catcher (*Hæmatopus moquini*), a

bird remarkable for its jet-black body colouring, crimson legs, and orange-red bill, is another bird which, although included in the sub-family of *Hæmatopodinæ*, or oyster-catchers, is at the same time a true member of the plover group. In South Africa this handsome shore bird is to be found along the coast, on either side of the continent, right away towards the equator. Many of the smaller plovers, when shot by the colonist, are, for want of more exact information, usually vaguely classed as "sand-pipers," but the handsome black South African oyster-catcher can be at once and easily identified.

Very few collectors in South Africa have hitherto had the time or opportunity for procuring and examining systematically the various members of this extremely interesting family. Layard and Andersson have done much, although even they have been a good deal circumscribed in their investigations. It can scarcely be doubted that further research among the innumerable birds of the South African interior, and the remote parts of the coast-line, will increase very considerably our knowledge of the habits of this group, and that within the next twenty years species hitherto unknown or unremarked will be added to the already considerable list of the plovers of South Africa.

CHAPTER X

FOX-HUNTING IN BECHUANALAND

South African Jackals—True Foxes—The silver-backed Jackal—Motluse Jackal—Small Buck—The veldt as a hunting-ground—South African Horses—Vryburg—The Fox-hounds—My first meet—The find—A run with Duyker—Fast gallop with Jackal—Steinbok hunting—A good run—Sir Frederick Carrington—His record in South Africa—Hunting at the Cape—The Bechuanaland Hounds—Remarkable sport.

FOX-HUNTING in the interior of South Africa, in a country hard upon the Tropic of Capricorn, may seem to the English sportsman rather a misnomer. Yet for some years recently, under the fostering care of that keen and excellent sportsman, Major-General Sir Frederick Carrington, foxhounds and fox-hunting flourished in British Bechuanaland.

I say fox-hunting advisedly, because the jackals of South Africa, which give such excellent sport before English-bred foxhounds, are, as every naturalist knows, as truly foxes as is *Canis vulpes*—Reynard of England—himself. The "foxes" commonly hunted in Bechuanaland are the handsome silver-

backed jackal (*Canis mesomelas*), *pukuye* of the Bechuanas, and *motluse* jackal (*Canis lateralis*). There is a third "fox," the curious Cape fennec or long-eared fox (*Otocyon megalotis*), which, however, is scarce and seldom hunted. Of these the silver-backed jackal is, perhaps, the oftener met with, and gives the better sport. He is wonderfully like his much-hunted relative at home. I have watched him in the far wilderness, just at dawn, as he steals over the veldt, quitting the scenes of his night-prowl for some pleasant earth or comfortable corner of the bush, and his whole demeanour, his shape, configuration, and his beautiful action, smooth, subtle, and gliding, stride for stride the exact counterpart of that of his cousin of England, proclaim him a fox of foxes. In colour, this jackal is, of course, widely different. His back is blackish, thickly sprinkled with the silvery hairs from which he takes his name. The under-parts are of a brilliant fox-colour. The motluse jackal is of a general warm brown colouring, and has a very thick furry coat. But besides these African foxes, two small antelopes, the steinbok and duyker, which are common all over South Africa, are also hunted, and very often give excellent runs. The duyker, especially, will stand before hounds in an astonishing manner, and has no end of staying power, in addition to the tremendous turn of speed with which all antelopes are

gifted. I have seen some excellent runs with them, and Sir Frederick Carrington tells me that he has known them often make a ten or twelve mile point. They are certainly far harder to account for than the jackal, good as the latter is.

The average English hunting man, accustomed as he is to the green pastures, moist ploughs, and swampy woodlands, and the almost invariably soft going of the old country, would, upon a first survey of the African veldt, pronounce it utterly hopeless for foxhounds and their followers.

He would see vast, sun-parched plains, thinly covered with long yellow grass—looking like nothing else than a boundless, over-ripe hayfield—a reddish soil, sun-baked and sandy, and dry as a brick-kiln, and abounding in all directions with trappy holes made by the ant-bear, the jackal, and the colonies of meerkats—small viverrine creatures, not unlike the mongoose of India. These earths and holes are a constant source of tribulation to the fox-hunter in Southern Africa, as they are to the big-game hunter farther up country, where the larger fauna still abound. The long grass hides their perils; falls are pretty numerous, and, but for the sharpness and sagacity of the Cape hunting-ponies, would be of even more frequent occurrence than they are.

But, apart from the natural difficulties of the country, there are no other obstacles; the veldt is

wild, free, and boundless; not a fence is to be found for a hundred miles; Bechuanaland is at present absolutely open ground. Here and there upon the rolling plains great patches of the grey-green vaal bush, or *mohatla*, and occasionally of the thorny acacia (*Acacia horrida*) mask the soil. These are the haunts of the stealthy duyker, which, as its name (*duyker* = the diver) implies, creeps, squats, and dives among the coverts, until absolutely driven out. The dainty steinbok—a small reddish antelope of beautiful appearance—is found indifferently in the open grass-veldt, or among bushes.

Occasionally the rider must be prepared for a rough out-crop of rocks, and boulders, and slipping shales, over which somehow or other in the heat of chase—and hounds run every whit as fast in the hot sun of Africa after jackal and small buck as after the fox at home—he must make his way. Luckily, the South African horse—pony we may almost call him—is a hardy, rough-and-tumble sort of nag, full of pluck and sporting spirit; he seldom or never goes lame, and, under all sorts of weight, his legs and feet stand, day after day, work that would speedily put an end to the career of English-bred horseflesh. And in South Africa, as at home, when the hounds mingle their wild melody, and the horn sounds, your nag reaches just as freely at his bit and strides just as keenly as an English-bred one. In October 1890 I

had come down country from a shooting and exploring expedition towards Lake Ngami, and was at Vryburg, the capital of British Bechuanaland. At that time Mr. F. J. Newton, the Colonial Secretary, had borrowed part of Sir Frederick Carrington's pack of foxhounds from Mafeking, and we were all able to vary the monotony of life in a frontier town with occasional runs in the surrounding country. Vryburg is a primitive little town—village one may rather call it—planted in the midst of rolling, shadeless, grassy plains. Its population, all told, was about 1200. The open veldt came right up to the edge of the town, and in a few minutes' walk or ride you could be sure of finding francolins, bustards, steinboks, duykers, and jackals. We had no trouble whatever in finding our quarry at any time just outside the town. Primmer, a capital man with hounds, formerly, I think, whip to Lord Leconfield's, and of late kennel huntsman and first whip to Sir Frederick Carrington, carried the horn, while Mr. Newton, and an occasional friend, whipped to him. I shall never forget the first meet I attended at Vryburg. It was so totally unlike a similar function in England. I have witnessed, at different times, meets with the Pytchley, Duke of Grafton's, Bicester, Warwickshire, Lord Leconfield's, and other packs. Here was a totally new experience. It was 4.30 p.m. The sun still blazed strongly in the north-western

sky. The heavens were of that hard pale turquoise blue so well known in Africa. Over on the far Transvaal horizon—to the eastward—lay a few symptoms of thunder-clouds, the forerunners of the summer rains. Yesterday, October 16, was the first day I had seen rain for six months. When trekking in the South Kalahari in April we had had the last of the rain-storms of the hot season, and thereafter, for six long months on end, not one drop of moisture had I seen fall upon the drouthy veldt. Hunting in South Africa is, of course, all the better during the rains, and even the one heavy shower of the day before augured well for improved scenting. Yet the soil was terribly athirst, and crying for much more moisture.

Our meet was in front of Mr. Newton's house, in the lower part of the town. Some dozen or fifteen men were collected. A few Civil servants; Mr. Newton, the acting Master, and his wife; the Crown Prosecutor, now Judge Vincent of Rhodesia; the Administrator's secretary; a Government surveyor or two; a well-known advocate, half Dutch, half Scotchman, a prominent supporter of the Afrikander Bond, whose incessant voice was as irrepressible upon the open veldt as in the court-house and the market-place; a storekeeper or two; a Jew canteen-keeper, who had picked up his riding, curiously enough, in the United States army; a Boer ex-freebooter, who,

having retired from that exhilarating profession, had settled down soberly under the Queen's Government: such were the heterogeneous elements attracted by that universal loadstone of mankind—sport.

Here were no gay pinks, no snowy breeches, well-groomed hats, or spotless tops. Most of us sheltered beneath the broad-brimmed felt hat common to South Africa, tweeds, cords, khaki, and any boots, gaiters, or other foot and leg gear obtainable in these regions. Primmer, the huntsman, looked workmanlike enough in the garb of the Border Police, of which he was once a trooper. His yellow-brown cord tunic and breeches, broad hat, brailed up on one side in true B.B.P.[1] fashion, and decorated with the gay silk scarf denoting the particular troop in which he served, would perhaps strike horror at an English covert-side, yet for the African veldt they were well enough in keeping. At all events, hounds seemed to regard their huntsman as keenly and affectionately as if he were clad in regulation pink, velvet cap, and irreproachable boots and breeches.

We had out some six or seven couples only. They were a moderately level lot, and included a few really good hounds. All were of English blood—mainly from the Bedale, Holderness, Cotswold, and Isle of Wight strains—bred at Mafeking, where the kennels then were. We now trotted away up the road lead-

[1] Bechuanaland Border Police.

ing to Takwaning (Mahura's Stadt) and Kuruman. In ten or fifteen minutes we were in some likely-looking veldt, thinly covered with vaal bush. Here hounds were thrown off. In five minutes or less there is a whimper, then succeed several louder and fiercer notes, and then, with a crash of voices, hounds are settled on the line of a steinbok, which dodges through the coverts in front of us. We run fast for ten minutes, then check; scent is evidently poor, and this buck has made good his escape. Ten minutes later a duyker is roused and driven out. He points for the north-west, and away we gallop, over some tremendously rough veldt, as hard as horses can manage. Then comes a check after fifteen minutes' scurry. We are quickly on the line again, hounds bearing left-handed in a wide curve. We hunt steadily for ten minutes till another check occurs, just on the edge of a broad dip or depression in the veldt. Two leading hounds perseveringly hit off the line again, others follow; there is a blast of the horn for stragglers, and away we go, hard at it again over a good piece of galloping ground. The buck is evidently ringing round to his old ground again; we are soon pointing for Vryburg, and finally, after three-quarters of an hour's steady hunting, we are back again close to where we found. Scent was by no means good; the country was far too dry. There had been a third check; the duyker thereby gained

additional start, and we finally lost him. It was now getting late—there is little or no twilight in this country—and hounds were taken home.

I was not out again until October 30. During the interval there had been heavy rains; the going was better, scent had greatly improved, and sport had been good. On the afternoon of this day we found a silver jackal in the veldt just north of the town. There was evidently any amount of scent, and hounds ran with the greatest dash and resolution. The jackal pointed north-west, and went as straight as an arrow. For twenty-five minutes jackal, hounds, and horsemen galloped their hardest. There was no fear of over-riding hounds. In ten minutes the field was spread-eagled over the veldt. Even the best-mounted could barely live near the pack, which ran compactly and well together. Towards the close we had to pick our way as best we might over a rather appalling out-crop of rocks and boulders. This surmounted, we found ourselves again upon a big flat, with nothing between us and the far horizon but Massouw's Kop, a hill many miles distant. Hounds were running faster and more fiercely, and were rapidly gaining on the jackal, which, just at the end of this brilliant gallop, was viewed forty or fifty yards only from the leaders. Some meerkat and jackal earths at this moment came providentially in his line—probably he had made them his point—

and into the biggest he went to ground, just in the nick of time to save his brush.

After a few minutes' rest—for we were all, on this warm African evening, hounds, men, and horses, somewhat blown and desperately hot—hounds were taken a little distance from the earth, in the hope that the jackal would bolt again. This is a common practice at the Cape, and, as a general rule, if the manœuvre is executed thoroughly, and extreme quiet observed, the jackal will presently decamp slyly, when the run is taken up again. In this instance our vulpine friend declined to be coaxed, and the earth was stopped until digging materials could be sent for. As this meant a long delay, most of us turned our horses for Vryburg again.

Next evening, November 1, the hounds were out again. We found steinbok twice. First we had a short, ringing gallop of fifteen minutes, and lost. This was followed by a long draw and another brief run. Losing this second steinbok, we quickly roused yet another of these antelopes, which stood before us capitally and over a good line for thirty-five minutes. We were now pointing right away over the open veldt, as if for the big salt-pan of Groot Chwaing, and presently found ourselves, after a long westwardly curve, in a wild, rocky, shallow valley beyond Zwartfontein. It was now darkening rapidly, and hounds had to be whipped off. This was a capital

run, and hounds well deserved blood. The few of us who went through the last and by far the most enjoyable of this evening's runs, including the acting Master and his wife, had a long ride home in the dark, and did not reach Vryburg till after 8 p.m.

These are only samples of the kind of sport provided by the Bechuanaland Foxhounds. I was not fortunate enough to see the whole pack out and in their best form; but I saw enough to warrant the conclusion that, at their best, these hounds must have been very formidable pursuers of buck or jackal. Some time before, hunting three days a week at Mafeking, these hounds scored five kills in one week. Sir Frederick Carrington then took them to Vryburg for three days' hunting, where they also scored five kills. Of these latter, one run was with a duyker, and lasted one hour; one with a jackal, fifty-six minutes without a check; one with a steinbok, thirty-five minutes; one with a jackal, one hour and thirty minutes; and another in which a jackal was run into in twenty minutes. These records are good enough for any hounds and any country; and, bearing in mind the difficulties of temperature, terrain, and scenting, are, in my opinion, remarkable evidences of the possibilities of sport (under good management) with foxhounds in a hot climate. The history of fox-hunting in South Africa is for the last twenty-two years inseparably

connected with the name of Sir Frederick Carrington. In 1875, as a subaltern in the 24th Regiment, Sir Frederick first hunted the Cape Foxhounds. The regiment had lately come out from Gibraltar, and Colonel (now General) Glyn brought five and a half couple of hounds from the Calpe Hunt. These, added to the remnant of a pack previously existing at the Cape under Captain (now Major-General Sir Francis) Grenfell and Mr. Selby Lowndes, which were taken over by the 24th, formed the nucleus of the Cape Hounds hunted by Mr. Carrington for three seasons under Col. Glyn's Mastership. More hounds were procured from England; and, under the vigorous *régime* of the ardent subaltern of the 24th, the Cape Hounds flourished exceedingly.

Silver jackals were principally hunted; the great Cape flats then abounded with them, and the favourite meets were at Durbanville, Klapmuts, Eerste River, Malmesbury, Klipheuvel, and other places. Meets were always at daylight; jackals were wonderfully stout and resourceful, and almost without exception stood up before hounds for an hour or more.

Mr. Carrington's whips were two well-known soldiers and sportsmen. Captain Grenfell, whose name has since become sufficiently well known in Zululand, Egypt, and elsewhere, was one; Lieutenant Coghill, whose gallant death with the 24th's colours

at Isandlwana will be ever remembered by Englishmen, was another.

Sir Frederick (then Lieutenant) Carrington carried the horn for three seasons with the greatest success, and the Cape Hounds never flourished so well as under his management. In 1878 came the beginning of a series of South African wars, in which Sir Frederick became busily engaged. The Kaffir war, the Zulu war, the Sekukuni campaign, and the Basuto war all followed in rapid succession. The fox-hunter became prominently engaged in native warfare, with ever-increasing credit to himself, and fox-hunting and foxhounds were perforce abandoned for sterner matters.

Since Sir Frederick Carrington's time, fox-hunting at the Cape has much fallen off. The Cape flats are becoming occupied by German immigrants, the jackals are disappearing, and for some time the hounds were given up entirely. I believe an effort has been recently made to revive them, with what success it is at present too early to say. In 1885 Major Carrington commanded a body of horse in Sir Charles Warren's successful expedition to Bechuanaland. Upon the settlement of that country he was nominated Colonel of the Bechuanaland Border Police, the new force raised to keep order in the Crown Colony of British Bechuanaland and the Protectorate beyond. In 1887 Col. Carrington

became Sir Frederick Carrington, K.C.M.G. Having settled down at Mafeking, after his long period of campaigning, Sir Frederick's thoughts naturally ran again in the direction of fox-hunting. Even as a youngster at Cheltenham College he had been an enthusiastic votary of Diana. Upon winter half-holidays, indeed, his pony was often to be seen waiting for him just outside the College gate. The instant school was dismissed the lad was on his pony's back, galloping away into the country, to nick in for an afternoon run with the Cotswold. Fox-hunting and soldiering seem naturally to go hand in hand. The Duke of Wellington evidently thought so when he kept foxhounds in the Peninsula, during his occupation of that country at the close of the Peninsular war.

The Bechuanaland Hounds were inaugurated by the purchase of three good hounds, Darling, Gossamer, and Venus, from the Cape pack at £7 apiece. Colonel Carrington had among his officers of the Bechuanaland Border Police another enthusiastic fox-hunter, Captain Lucy. Between them they soon got together a highly creditable pack. Five more couple were got up from the Cape, four couple from Natal, and at different times various drafts from the Holderness, Cotswold, Bedale, and Isle of Wight. In those days they hunted all the year round, twice a week, at daylight—a remarkable feat, considering

the excessively dry nature of the country and climate. When the rains fell—from November to March—and scent became improved, they hunted three times a week, vanning the hounds to and from the veldt.

Some remarkable sport was shown during the best days of the Bechuanaland Hounds. Jackal, steinbok, and duyker were all plentiful, and each afforded excellent sport. A duyker was killed after a magnificent run of one hour and thirty minutes. Once hounds were pressing a steinbok very hard, when a jackal was viewed in front of the buck, running the same line. Steinbok and jackal were finally both run to earth in the same big ant-bear hole—a remarkable yet perfectly true incident. Both were dug out; the buck was found to be dead, while the jackal was uninjured. As far as I know, this is quite an unparalleled feat in the annals of foxhounds.

The jackals seldom went to ground, and would often run clean over open earths, and die gallantly in the open.

Sir Frederick Carrington hunted these hounds for six or seven years. Captain Lucy whipped to him so long as he remained in the country, and Primmer officiated as second whip and kennel huntsman. Later on, Ryan, who had been with the V.W.H. and Lord Shannon, also assisted.

For some seasons the hounds, by dint of much care

and trouble, were got into excellent form, and, for a scratch pack, could scarcely be excelled for hunting in a wild, rough country, and for keenness, pace, and general handiness. Many and many a good run have the inhabitants of Mafeking and Vryburg enjoyed with the Bechuanaland Hounds.

Then came a time when, in view of impending Matabele troubles, and the settlement of Mashonaland, Sir Frederick Carrington became permanently stationed at Macloutsi, on the Matabeleland border. It was impossible to continue his Mastership further, so, to the general regret, the hounds were sold and the pack dispersed. Lieut. Gosling, of the B.B.P., carried on hunting for another season at Vryburg, but the Bechuanaland Foxhounds have, within this last year or two, quite disappeared. Englishmen, however, are thronging year by year in greater numbers into the interior of South Africa. A pack has been started in Rhodesia; another at Johannesburg. The love of sport is as deeply implanted in the breasts of the colonists as in their brethren at home, and it is not too much to hope that once more, at no very remote period, foxhounds and fox-hunting will once again flourish in Bechuanaland, perhaps even in territories yet more remote. The thrilling melody of hounds in full cry, the inspiring twang of the horn, are, as I can testify, every whit as welcome upon the embrowned veldt and beneath the cloud-

less sky of South Africa as amid the green pastures of Old England.

Beyond the Zambesi, in more tropical and unhealthy Africa, I do not think that the foxhound can ever be made to flourish. But upon the high and healthy plains of much of Southern Africa it has been conclusively proved that the hound can be made, with care, to thrive, to successfully propagate its species, and to afford very excellent hunting. And for this satisfactory result Sir Frederick Carrington has mainly to be thanked.

CHAPTER XI

GIRAFFES, AND HOW TO CAPTURE THEM

Present dearth of Giraffes—Arrival of a South African specimen—Early appearance of Giraffes in history—Zoological Society's first specimens—Giraffe of Thothmes III—Paces of Giraffe—Present habitat—Fossil remains—Characteristics of the animal—Marrow-bones—Dentition—Eyesight—Powers of speed—Names and derivations—New form of Giraffe from Somaliland—Curious coloration—Growing scarcity in North Africa—Best country for capture—Cost of procuring specimens—Sketch of expedition.

For some years past there has been an extraordinary dearth of giraffes in European collections and the European markets. The Zoological Society lost in 1892 the last of its two specimens of this gigantic quadruped, and until the year 1895, although extremely anxious to again possess itself of examples of a creature so attractive to visitors at the Gardens and so interesting to naturalists, had not succeeded in procuring even a single representative. This fact may be deemed remarkable, when it is remembered that the Society offered £1000 for a pair—male and female. It was understood at the

time of the decease of the last "Zoo" giraffe that only one example—an old male—was procurable from the varied stocks of all the wild beast dealers in Europe. Fortunately for all lovers of animal life, a young female giraffe, captured by Boer hunters in South-East Africa, was, after much difficulty, safely landed in England in February 1895. The Zoological Society managed to secure this rare specimen—no South African giraffe having been previously landed in Europe—and the captive is now thriving excellently well in the Regent's Park Gardens.[1]

There are several reasons which combine to account for this singular dearth of giraffes. Before entering upon them, however, it may not be unprofitable to trace very briefly the history of captive giraffes in Europe. And primarily one must go back to the days of Imperial Rome, when first the tall giraffe was brought from Northern Africa—from the far Libyan Desert—to grace the triumphs and the arena of various emperors. First said by Pliny to have been shown to the Romans in the dictatorship of Julius Cæsar, giraffes were undoubtedly exhibited by several emperors. Gordian II is said to have possessed ten at one time, while Aurelian displayed

[1] While these pages are in the press, I learn that this female is to be shortly joined by a young male giraffe, the property of the Queen. This animal, captured in the Northern Kalahari, is a Jubilee present to her Majesty from Bathoen, a well-known chief in the Bechuanaland Protectorate.

giraffes, among other remarkable animals, in his triumph after the conquest of Palmyra and capture of Zenobia. Fond as were the Roman people of zoological novelty, their pleasure and amazement must have been keen indeed when these stately, beautiful, and towering animals were first seen stalking about the arena. One can imagine the buzz of wonder and amazement spreading round the vast crowded amphitheatre at the first sight of *Camelopardalis giraffa* in its captive state. There is mention of the giraffe by Pliny, Ælian, and Strabo; but the most careful account of the quadruped in ancient times seems to have been given in the *Æthiopica* of Heliodorus, Bishop of Tricca, who describes the bringing of one of these rare creatures by the ambassadors of the Axeomitæ (the inhabitants of the modern Abyssinia), among other presents of Hydaspes. Two ambassadors from Zoe, mother of the young Emperor, Constantine VII, to Moktader, the then Caliph of Bagdad, were shown in the year 911 a giraffe, lynxes, and other animals.

Coming to the Middle Ages, there is a curious reference to the giraffe in an old Spanish book (*Historia del Grand Tamerlin*), published at Madrid in 1782. In this book there is a clear if quaint description of the animal in an account of an embassy from Henri III of Castile to Tamerlane in 1403. This giraffe was seen by the embassy at Khoy on

the borders of Armenia and Persia. It was there called the *Sornufa*, and appears to have been sent to Tamerlane by the Sultan of Babylon. How the animal came into the possession of the Sultan of Babylon is not shown.

From the heyday of the Roman Empire until the end of the fifteenth century the giraffe was utterly unknown to Europe. Towards the last years of that century Lorenzo de Medici became possessed of a specimen—undoubtedly from North Africa—which was exhibited in Florence, and caused the greatest excitement among the people. This animal seems to have been perfectly tame, and, as it was conducted through the crowded streets, often stopped, and raising its lofty head to some high balcony, entreated and received some dainty—apples, or fruit, or confections—from the inhabitants of the house before which it halted.

From Lorenzo de Medici's time until the reign of George IV the giraffe in the living state once more became unknown to European eyes. But in 1827 Mohammed Ali, Viceroy of Egypt, presented the King of England with a specimen—the first ever to appear in England—which, however, survived only for a few months in the Royal Menagerie at Windsor.

In 1836, owing to the exertions of the Zoological Society, a M. Thibaut, a Soudan trader, after infinite trouble, succeeded in capturing and safely bringing

to England two young giraffes—male and female—which throve wonderfully in their new home, and became the progenitors of seven calves before the female died in 1852. The capture of these young giraffes was effected in the south-west of Kordofan (Soudan region), and after the death of the mother, which the Arabs were quite unable, of course, to take alive, her calf was upon the following morning overtaken by the mounted hunters and made captive. "Possessed of this giraffe," says M. Thibaut, "it was necessary to rest for three or four days in order to render it sufficiently tame. During this period an Arab constantly holds it at the end of a long cord. By degrees it becomes accustomed to the presence of man, and takes a little nourishment. To furnish milk for it I had brought with me female camels. It became gradually reconciled to its condition, and was willing to follow in short stages the route of our caravan." This young animal and another captured upon the same expedition were conducted to Cairo, Alexandria, and Malta, where they passed the winter; and thence, after a trying and stormy sea passage of twenty-four days, they safely reached England.

The capture of giraffes was from indisputable evidence a well-known practice among the savage North African tribes subject to Egypt. This may easily be proved by Egyptian monuments, upon which are faithfully depicted representations of the young

giraffe, carefully roped by each fore-leg, being haled along by some African negroid people. One of these monumental illustrations (a copy of which may be seen in Sir J. Gardner Wilkinson's *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*) is worthy of note as the first representation in the world's history of the giraffe. The picture was carved no less than 3385 years ago, in the reign of Thothmes III (the Pharaoh of the Exodus). Thothmes was a great conqueror, and, as may be seen by his monuments, received offerings of gold, ivory, wood, grain, cattle, apes, elephants, giraffes, and many other animals, from tributary chiefs.

The carved picture of this giraffe is, all things considered, a really excellent one. Whether the ape, which is depicted climbing the tall neck of the creature, is an equally faithful portrayal by the artist, or whether it was merely a *jeu d'esprit* for the sake of emphasizing the tree-like neck of the giraffe, it would be hard to say. But, considering that a stabled horse can become keenly attached to a domestic cat, and will even permit it to perambulate and make a resting-place of its back, it requires no great stretch of imagination to suppose that a young tame giraffe might tolerate the attentions of a small monkey.

It may be laid down as an indisputable axiom that the mature giraffe cannot be captured alive.

An old bull of nineteen or twenty feet high, or a great cow of seventeen or eighteen feet, are not animals that can be readily handled. It is true a hunter mounted on a good horse can by hard riding run a giraffe to a standstill in a headlong chase of from five to seven miles. But then he must be prepared either to shoot his quarry or to let it depart in peace as soon as it shall have recovered its wind. Offensively the giraffe can offer but the poorest resistance; but its height, strength, and enormous weight—an old bull will weigh a ton or more—render this otherwise defenceless creature anything but an easy beast to lead captive or to tame. The giraffe has, too, a nasty habit when brought to bay of striking out with its fore-feet, and of butting with its head; and it seems to be a generally accepted theory among native hunters that only the young can be taken and tamed. The pace of this animal when pursued is, its height, bulk, and awkwardness all considered, amazing. When first aroused it steals away at a shambling, striding walk, which looks slow but is in reality a fast pace. When pressed at its top speed the gait is altered to a sort of awkward bounding gallop, the two legs on either side moving simultaneously, the long neck and head swinging up and down in a machine-like unison, the body swaying and pitching in an extraordinary manner. There is nothing else like it in nature.

The long black tails are meanwhile whirled briskly to and fro over the back with a loud swishing noise, which can be plainly heard as the rider presses close in the rear of these astounding quadrupeds; and when (as happened once to the writer in the Ngamiland country) a large troop of eighteen or twenty of these immense and unique animals come sailing across the line of vision, the whole procession resembles some dream-like pageant of an era long remote and forgotten in the world's annals. Such a spectacle can now-a-days only be witnessed in the far-distant deserts of remote and savage Africa. At the beginning of this century, and for some years later, giraffes were to be found ranging as far south as the Orange River; to-day one first finds them in the North Kalahari country, and most plentifully in the wild desolate forest region fringing the southern bank of the Botletli river, Ngamiland.

In this desperately prosaic modern life of ours, the giraffe viewed in the wild state seems, ancient as is its descent, too wonderful, too incongruous a beast to survive much longer in the world's history. And it is a saddening reflection that these marvellous creations of nature, which with their prototypes have roamed the earth for thousands of years, should be now measurably approaching a period of extinction. Firearms have much to answer for, and firearms, which have rapidly thinned out the giraffe from Southern Africa

and the Equatorial Soudan, will no doubt within the next hundred years, probably much less, have wrought the downfall of the last giraffe left to the dark continent.

Ages ago, in the Miocene Period, the giraffe family was more numerously represented, and enjoyed a larger geographical range than at present. Fossil remains of extinct species have been found in Greece and India; while an allied form, the *Helladotherium*, was distributed at the same epoch as widely as from the south of France to Northern India. Gradually, as the ages passed, these older forms disappeared, and the vast continent of Africa—that marvellous playground of zoological life—became the final home of the giraffe, the last surviving representative of the ancient family of *Camelopardelidæ*.

By some scientists the giraffe has been placed intermediately between the deer and ox families; others class it as a distinct family.[1] It may be pointed out that the animal has neither true horns nor antlers. It has, it is true, two short bony protuberances upon the head; these are round, covered with hair and slightly tufted, but cannot be put down as anything

[1] Rütimeyer has called the giraffes "a most fantastic kind of deer." Oscar Smidt observes, as I think with more reason, "The Giraffes stand close to the Deer, not because they have branched off from the Deer, but because the unknown ancestors on both sides showed a disposition to certain reductions and convergencies of a similar kind."

but the most rudimentary and inchoate attempt at horns. The neck vertebræ are, as in other mammals, seven in number, but are excessively long. The spurious hoofs common to most of the ruminants are wanting in the giraffe; the hoofs are divided, and in shape somewhat resemble a huge and greatly elongated cow's foot, if such a thing can be imagined. Notwithstanding its size—and the "spoor," or foot-print, of an old bull is enormous—the foot of a giraffe is fairly symmetrical, especially in the just mature animal, before the hoof has become worn and broken. Unlike the hoof of a wild zebra, which always remains perfect, intact, and hard as a flint, the hoof of the giraffe becomes in old age, even in the wild state, very worn and chipped. The nostrils are furnished with a peculiar arrangement of muscles, by which they can be opened or shut at will; and it has been suggested that this is a provision of nature against the effects of passing sandstorms. I cannot agree with this theory. The haunts of the giraffe, usually dense thorny bush or low acacia forests, are not much visited by sandstorms; and if they were, why should not the other fauna of the country be similarly protected as to their nostrils? I have little doubt myself that this curious mechanism of sphincter muscles is merely a defence against the long thorns of the acacias, amid which the giraffe loves to browse; and that the delicate interior of the nostril

is thus momentarily closed at will and protected from the spiny terrors of the *Acacia giraffæ* and *Acacia horrida*, from which the animal mainly takes its food. Similarly the upper lip, which projects far below the nostril, as may be seen at the Natural History Museum, is thick, tough, and impervious, and furnished in addition with a dense, short, velvety coating of hair. The tongue is remarkable for its great length (eighteen to twenty inches) and singular flexibility; indeed, the giraffe's tongue plays for its owner, in the procuring of food and the prehension and tearing down of succulent leafage, exactly the part of the elephant's trunk. The tongue is capital eating, as indeed is the flesh of the whole animal, when young or just mature. A fat cow is considered the greatest delicacy. The meat is equal to extremely good veal, with a game-like flavour of its own. But the tit-bit of the giraffe—and a very large tit-bit it is, often as much as three feet in length—is the marrow bone, the greatest luxury of its kind in the world. Well roasted over the camp fire, and then sawn in half, the immense bone furnishes the most luscious of marrow, far surpassing in richness and delicacy our beef marrow-bones at home. My hunting companion upon a recent expedition became so much enamoured of this *bonne-bouche*, that he fashioned for our use two long wooden spoons, each about two feet in length, the better to extract the toothsome dainty.

The dentition of the animal is similar to that of antelopes, sheep, goats, and oxen; and herein, perhaps, the great quadruped most closely approaches these families. It is to be noted, however, that the canine teeth found in the male dentition of most of the deer kind are wanting. The eye of the giraffe is dark, melting, shaded by long lashes, and altogether beautiful. Commanding, from its height, and the placing and structure of the eye, a wide field of vision, the timid and defenceless creature is an extremely difficult animal to surprise, except in remote districts where the hunter is little known; and backed, as is its wonderfully acute vision, by a highly developed sense of scent and great powers of fleetness and endurance, the giraffe takes a good deal of finding and catching. Only the well-mounted hunter stands much chance of running down this mighty game in fair chase; and unless the hunting-horse be put to its hardest gallop in the first mile or two, and shots are speedily obtained at close quarters, the timid quarry will probably get clean away.

The sight of a troop of giraffes browsing peacefully in their native acacia forests, reaching with upstretched neck and extended tongue at some green succulent leafage far up in the spreading *kameel-doorn* tree, is one of the most beautiful things in nature. No man that has once seen such a spectacle is ever likely to forget it. A few years back, while riding with

my native hunter in the Botletli river hunting veldt, I came suddenly upon a troop of nineteen giraffes thus busily occupied; and, although I have set eyes on many rare and beautiful things in the African wilderness, that most fascinating revelation of wild animal life will never fade from memory.

The colouring of giraffes in the wild state is far richer than in captivity, and varies from a dark chestnut, turning black upon the back and shoulders, in the old bulls, to the rich yellow of the cows and the lemon fawn of the calves. The colours vary a good deal: I have seen and shot an old cow almost as dark upon the back as a patriarchal bull. The neck is furnished with a short, thickish chestnut mane, while the tail ends in a tassel of long and very thick and wiry black hairs, providing one of the best natural fly-whisks in the animal world. These hairs, neatly plaited in various patterns, are frequently used by the Bechuanas in the ornamentation of the handles of whips, fly-whisks, and other articles; sometimes, too, as a foundation for the bead bangles with which the women-folk decorate their arms and legs.

It is well known that, until the last year or two, only one form of giraffe (*Camelopardalis giraffa*) was believed to exist in Africa. But, as Pliny said long ago, *Ex Africa semper aliquid novi*, and out of Africa's wonderful store has appeared, after all these years, yet another rarity. It has remained for Somaliland,

that "unknown horn of Africa," hitherto almost unexplored, and now found to be rich in new species, to produce even a new giraffe. Major C. E. Wood of the North Staffordshire Regiment, while hunting in 1893 in that country, shot a female giraffe, the colouring and marking of which differ widely from the clear dappling of the giraffes so long known to science. In this new form, the skin of which has been brought home, instead of the patches of darker coloration being clearly and widely defined, the whole body colouring of the animal appears of a rich chestnut, through which run thin and minute lines of creamy white in hexagonal and sexagonal patterns. I have seen and handled this new skin at Mr. Rowland Ward's, and it certainly presents a vast contrast to the skins of all South African giraffes, and to others from Sennaar, the Soudan, and elsewhere. At a short distance the Somaliland giraffe appears to be entirely chestnut-coloured; at the same distance the ordinary species of giraffe would appear distinctly mottled. Major Wood saw seven giraffes of this new variety—it will scarcely be accounted a new species—and we may hope not long hence to have in England further specimens. It is strange, indeed, that this new form should have remained so long unknown, considering how eagerly Africa has been ransacked.

The ancients, who knew this creature by the name

Camelopardalis, evidently likened it partly to the camel, partly to the leopard: to the camel, probably, from some faint resemblance in the face, and length of neck and legs, and from the strange similar habit of moving both legs on one side simultaneously—a remarkable resemblance; to the leopard, from its spots and colouring. The Boers of South Africa, curiously enough, have always called the giraffe *kameel*—a camel; and, indeed, so widely is this name recognized in South Africa, that all English interior hunters speak also of the giraffe as "camel." The name "giraffe" itself seems to have been derived from the Arabian *zirapha*, which by some is supposed to have been a corruption of *zoraphé*, the Egyptian for "long neck." Others, again, suppose *zirapha*, or *zerafa*, to be a corruption of *zuruphatà*, an Arabic word signifying elegance or beauty. Others, yet again, connect the name with *seraph*,—a pretty compliment to this strangely beautiful creature. The Bechuana name is *tutla* (pronounced *tootla*), the Matabele *intutla*, while the Hottentots know the tall quadruped as *naip*. The Masarwa Bushmen, a race of pure hunters who inhabit the remote parts of the North Kalahari region, and the wild desert country thence to the Zambesi, call the animal *ñ'abē* (pronounced *ng'habē*). These Masarwa Bushmen appear to be an ancient aboriginal race, somewhat allied to the Korannas living along

the Orange River; they speak a singular language of their own, abounding in clicks, and resembling to my mind more nearly the language of baboons than of human beings. Even their over-lords the Bechuanas can scarcely comprehend them. It is, I think, probable that these Masarwas were, like the smaller Hottentot Bushmen and pure Hottentots of the old Cape Colony, settled in South Africa long before the Bantu races—the Kaffirs, Bechuanas, Basutos, and Zulus—forced their way south. And it is a very remarkable fact, that Pliny in his day speaks of the then Ethiopian name for giraffe as *nabis*, or *nabin*, almost identically the same word as that used by the Masarwa Bushmen of the present time.

Having said thus much concerning giraffes and giraffe lore, I will turn to the best method of capturing them.

Now-a-days, from a variety of reasons, giraffes are extremely hard to procure from North Africa, whence by way of the Red Sea ports—Suakin and Massowah—they were until of late mainly procured. From much persecution by Arabs and Soudanese, and the introduction of firearms and horses, they have been pushed far to the south of the Soudan. The Soudan war has practically closed the export trade in these rare creatures by way of the Red Sea, and there seems little present likelihood of matters being mended in this respect. In certain parts of East

Africa, between the coast and the Nyanza Lakes, giraffes are still fairly plentiful; but here again difficulties with fierce tribes, such as the Masai and others, prevent anything like a free export in wild animals.

At the present moment the most accessible country for the capture and exportation of young giraffes is the North Kalahari region, bordering the southern bank of the Lake (or Botletli) river, Ngamiland. This region, which still supports large numbers of these gigantic creatures, has always been famous for giraffes. Noka Ea Botletli, the Bechuana name for Lake Ngami and the Botletli river which joins it, means simply, "The water of the giraffe." The Bushman name for the lake (of still more ancient origin) is Ñ'abē (pronounced Ng'habē) and not Ngami. Ng'habē, too, as I have shown, means "the giraffe." I have made inquiries on the spot, and I have little doubt that both these names were given in consequence of the extraordinary quantities of giraffes anciently found in this vicinity.[1]

Over much of this country Khama, chief of the Bamangwato, a staunch and constant friend and ally

[1] There is an ingenious suggestion in Chapman's *Travels*, published in the sixties, that Ng'habē, the Bushman name for the giraffe, took its derivation from Ng'habba, "to rock," from the peculiar gait of this animal. Chapman goes on to state that the Bushmen compared the rocking or tossing waters of Lake Ngami, when disturbed, with the motion of the giraffe, and therefore furnished it with the same name—Ng'habē.

of the British, holds sway. I was hunting in that very veldt in 1890 by Khama's permission, and, thanks to his generosity and aid, was provided with the best of hunters and guides. During this expedition my companion and I more than once came upon troops of giraffes in which were young calves, which might certainly have been captured with some care, trouble, and hard work. At that time, unfortunately, we had no milch cows with us; and thus, even if we had captured giraffe calves, we could never have kept them alive without a supply of the necessary milk. Just then, too, we had not the remotest idea of the approaching scarcity of giraffes, or of the extreme monetary value of their capture. We contented ourselves, therefore, with shooting a few mature specimens, and procuring a food supply for our servants and the tribesmen amongst whom we were hunting.

I think it possible that Khama might be induced to take the trouble to send into this desert country, and by help of his Masarwa Bushmen endeavour to procure the young of giraffes. It is a long and fatiguing piece of travel from his capital, however; the terrible "Thirst-land" has to be crossed and recrossed; milch cows must be taken; and, without the controlling head and hand of a European, I greatly doubt, even if the chief lent his assistance, whether such a quest would be a successful one.

The young giraffes might be captured; but sufficient care and attention might not be ensured so as to bring them sound and living to Palachwe, Khama's chief town in Bamangwato, North Bechuanaland.

For some time the Zoological Society offered, as I have said, £1000 for a pair (male and female) of giraffes delivered in England. This seems a large sum, but in reality it is not a very magnificent reward. Think of the time, trouble, and hardship involved in seeking and securing these timid giants in their waterless and inaccessible haunts. For three-fourths of the year giraffes can exist without water; and, as I can personally testify, they are, in their best country, now-a-days usually only to be encountered in absolutely waterless desert, the nearest portion of it from twenty to forty miles from any river or fountain. The trouble and risk is thus vastly increased; and even when captured, conceive the expense, care, and forethought necessary to conduct such captives safely across the desert, feed them, and land them safely at Cape Town, after a journey of 1300 or 1400 miles. At Palachwe, Khama's capital, 1150 miles from Cape Town, the railway is now available certainly; but giraffes are not easy cattle to handle on a railway journey, although the transport might with care be managed.

I have reckoned the prime cost of getting a young giraffe from Khama's country to England, including

the expenses of a special attendant, all told, at not less than £400—probably £500 would be nearer the mark; so that the Zoological Society may rest assured that £500 for a single specimen landed here leaves little or no margin of profit. If the Society really desires to secure to its numerous visitors once again the spectacle of several of these stately creatures stalking placidly about the Regent's Park enclosures, it should make up its mind to send out a special expedition to Khama's country for the purpose, or to combine with other kindred societies in doing so. From present appearances more giraffes than the two examples recently secured [1] are not likely to be on offer in England or even Europe for some time to come—perhaps for years; and it is absolutely certain that as each month sees the unceasing destruction of giraffes in Africa, the supply cannot fail to become scarcer and more intermittent. Time is assuredly of the essence in this matter. Even in Khama's country these rare and beautiful creatures become scarcer year by year; while it is a fact, that recently, within two seasons, in the country round Lake Ngami alone, three hundred giraffes have been slain solely for the value of their hides and flesh.

Probably for an outlay of from £1000 to £1500

[1] I am supposing that the young male, presented by Chief Bathoen, safely reaches England.

such an expedition as I speak of would result in the capture of from four to six giraffe calves. There would be an element of risk, of course, but it would be a slight one. I will answer for it that Khama's hearty co-operation could be secured for such a scheme. An emissary, used to veldt life, a good rider and shot, could be sent up to Palachwe with hunting horses at no great expense. There a wagon and oxen could be procured, as well as all stores and provisions, and half-a-dozen milch cows. Hunters, drivers, and servants would be provided by the chief at moderate rates, and absolute obedience to orders would, as I can personally vouch, be assured by Khama's commands. The best season to attempt the capture would be in January or February, when the calves would be young. There would be some risk of fever on the Botletli river at that season; but that must be hazarded, and the wagon could stand a mile or two away from the waterside so as to avoid malaria.

Before the expedition started, a trusty messenger from Khama should be despatched to the Masarwas, Bakurutse, and Makalakas, some forty or fifty miles up the river, telling them to spoor up and trace the herds of giraffes containing quite young calves. This would be no very difficult matter; the Masarwa Bushmen of that district, marvellous trackers and hunters as they are, are pretty sure to know the

numbers and haunts of all the giraffes in their vicinity. A very good place from which to start operations would be Masinya's Kraal.

With the expedition three or four South African water-carts should be taken in. These water-carts consist merely of large barrels fastened upon wheels. By means of these a camp might be formed some thirty miles south of the Botletli, right in the giraffe veldt, where a week's hunting might be indulged in at a time. The water-carts would be taken across the plains by oxen, which would then return to the river, and reliefs of water could with some trouble be managed.

The hunting would be carried out by the white man or men and two mounted natives, armed with ropes or raw hide "riems." Once one or two troops of giraffes containing young were located, there would be no insuperable difficulty in running down and securing three or four small calves in a few weeks' hunting. It would probably be necessary for two horsemen at a time to devote themselves to the capture, after which, by help of the milch cows, and by handling the baby giraffes in the manner described by M. Thibaut (referred to in the earlier part of this chapter), the captives might be conducted by easy stages across the desert again to Palachwe, and thence brought to England.

Of course even with these precautions there is

always the risk of the young creatures dying. There have been many young giraffes lost on the east coast in recent years after being brought out from the interior at much expense and trouble. Out of six captured by Dutch hunters on the Sabi river at the end of 1894 only one—the female now to be seen in Regent's Park—was preserved alive. The others broke their necks, or perished from rough and ignorant treatment. Any well-to-do English gentleman hunting in Africa—and there are many such—would earn the thanks of the civilized community, and especially of all lovers of nature and of wild animal life, by devoting some money and a few months of his time to such a capturing expedition as I have indicated. Such a trip would be full of the keenest possible interest, and it goes without saying, that no small measure of excitement would be thrown in.

Once tamed and brought to England, giraffes do well enough and breed freely, as the records of the Zoological Society show. There is no difficulty in feeding them after the infant stage. In place of their native acacia leaves they will take readily to hay, clover, corn, carrots, onions, and other vegetables. They become fond even of dog-biscuit. I have seen "Bet," the giraffe cow which died some years since at the Zoo, straddle out her fore-legs and bend her long neck time after time to pick up a piece of biscuit

thrown on the ground. In the same awkward manner do these wonderful animals drink.

It is a thousand pities that some natural game reserve or park cannot be formed in South Africa, in which giraffes might wander in peace and propagate their species. There are many suitable localities, and the land is cheap enough in all conscience. I am afraid, in these utilitarian days, however, such a scheme is too much to hope for. In another century (possibly much less) the giraffe, one of the noblest and most wonderful quadrupeds ever evolved by nature, will have disappeared, and the land of Africa, which this stately creature has adorned for many thousands of years, will know it no more.

CHAPTER XII

ZEBRAS AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

Peculiar to Africa—Perfectly adapted to savage landscape—Ancestors of equine race—The Hipparion—Stripings—Lord Norton's hybrid—The four forms of Zebra—Appearances in history—The Mountain Zebra—Habits and distribution—A magnificent spectacle—Ferocity—Examples at Zoological Gardens—Grèvy's Zebra—Characteristics and range—Burchell's Zebra—Description—Pace—Chapman's variety—Present distribution—Experiments in harness—The Quagga—Now extinct—Description—Former plenty—Fine spectacle—Restricted range.

Of all those countless throngs of wild animal life, with which, from time immemorial, the African continent has been so richly endowed, no form is more beautiful or more interesting than the zebra. Like the giraffe, the gnu or *wildebeest*, and the hippopotamus, the zebra is a form of life quite peculiar to the Dark Continent. For thousands of years has this handsome creature in its various species scoured the plain and the mountain, adding everywhere and at all times a singular beauty to the wild veldt. For thousands of years has it flourished, little checked by the occasional assaults and simple

weapons of the various tribes within its habitat, or even by the ravages of its incessant foe, the lion. Unhappily there are incontestable signs that the immemorial reign of this striking group of quadrupeds is approaching a close. One form—the quagga—has vanished completely; another—the true or mountain zebra—is measurably approaching extinction: even the most prolific of the group—Burchell's zebra—is being exterminated from Southern Africa at an alarming rate. It may be no great waste of time, therefore, to consider briefly some of the main features of the life history of these striking examples of Africa's disappearing fauna.

I have had the opportunity of observing in their own wild haunts two of the species; the mountain zebra, and Burchell's zebra—the zebra of the plains; and my conclusion is, that no form of animal life was ever more adapted to enliven and adorn a savage landscape. Grazing; at rest; fleeting over the plains; standing statue-like, sentinel among the most rugged mountain scenery; or climbing or descending at the trot or gallop with equal ease the most rocky and formidable hill-sides, I have watched with infinite delight Burchell's and the true zebra in their own chosen haunts. In their captive state, also, I have closely observed these creatures; and I can safely assert that, whether free or captive, the

zebra is invariably a picture of grace and beauty, a perfect type of feral life.

Before entering upon the characteristics and habitats of the various members of the zebra group, it may be worth while to glance back for a moment at the ancestors of these and others of the great equine family. It seems rather absurd to remember that the nearest living relatives which the horses, zebras, and asses now possess on this earth of ours are the tapirs and rhinoceroses; but so it is. Far back in dim and remote epochs these animals can be traced to a common ancestry,—the *Perissodactyla*, or "odd-toed" animals. To sum up briefly the wonderful discoveries of geologists and palæontologists relating to this subject, the equine pedigree may be thus traced: 1. Hyracotherium; 2. Palæotherium; 3. Anchitherium; 4. Hipparion and allied forms; 5. Zebras, Horses, and Asses.

These successions and developments have, of course, been the slow product of thousands upon thousands of years. In process of time the far remote ancestors of these families branched off and became developed and specialized in various forms; and the horse and zebra may now turn up their handsome muzzles and consider themselves only "very distantly connected" with the tapir and rhinoceros. On the other hand, these latter creatures may retort by pointing, as evidence of

ancient blood and breeding, to their extremely old-world air—the tapir in particular having remained in almost the exact form of his ancestors of the Miocene period. The tapir, indeed, may well congratulate himself as by far the most old and crusted Tory of the entire animal world, not even excepting the rhinoceros. The Hipparion, or three-toed horse, or its allied forms, appear to be the nearest of these very dim ancestors of the equine group. This animal seems to have been of about the size of an ass, and was distinguished, as may be seen in the work below referred to, by two false toes at the back of the hoof, which in the present representatives of the equine race have long since disappeared. It is curious to note, from the very interesting drawings of Gaudry—reproduced by Sir W. H. Flower in his excellent monograph of *The Horse* (Modern Science series)—how the toes of the earlier forms of equine ancestry have gradually disappeared. In the Anchitherium there are only three toes remaining, of which the middle one subsequently became completely specialized in the hoof of the modern zebra, horse, and ass. In the next stage, in the Hipparion, the middle toe has become still more developed, while the outer digits are visibly dwindling and remain mere false toes, or dew-claws, well up at the back. When the earliest fossil form of horse is examined, these rudimentary toes have clean van-

ished, and the foot-bones are exactly as they still remain.

It is a moot point where the ancestral home of the present race of *equidæ* (in which are included the horse, zebra, and ass) is to be sought. More recently a strong impression—created by the discovery of immense deposits of fossil bones—seems to have been gathered that America was the first home of the family; and that by degrees they moved westward into Asia, Africa, and Europe. Despite the advances of palæontology, however, nothing certain upon this head can be absolutely laid down. It is beyond question that the present forms of *equidæ* became gradually specialized and developed to suit a higher and drier habitat and a firmer soil than their remoter ancestry—dwellers, like the tapir, in damp, marshy forests—had used. The gradual disappearance of the toes, and the development of the ancient form of toed foot into a single hoof, is strong evidence upon this point. Sir W. H. Flower has well pointed out that "all existing species of the family are dwellers in dry, open, and generally elevated plains. None are inhabitants of gloomy forests or reeking marshes. Fresh air, dryness, and light, are essential to their well-being." To no members of the equine family can these remarks be said more truly to apply than to the zebras, a group invariably revelling in high, dry

plains (sometimes considerable mountains, as in the case of the true zebra), fresh air, and almost constant sunlight.

Although the fossilized bones of the earliest modern type of horse (and therefore the general shape) are well authenticated, the colour, markings, and external characteristics are quite unknown. Upon this head we can only theorize or guess. Darwin, in his *Variations of Animals and Plants under Domestication*, seems to have formed a strong opinion that there is a "probability of the descent of all the existing races from a single dun-coloured, more or less striped primitive stock, to which our horses occasionally revert;" and indeed there seems to be a pretty general consensus of opinion in this direction. The zebra group, a manifestly pure and very ancient type, unaltered by selection or by breeding experiments while in captivity, may be cited as strong presumptive evidence of a striped ancestry of the present equine race. Even after thousands of years of domestication, horses, asses, and mules in all parts of the world manifest a strong tendency to revert to stripings. In horses this tendency occurs oftenest in duns, mouse-duns, creams, and yellows, which Darwin after infinite research selected as the probable colour of the primitive stock. In Norway, where the majority of the small hardy horses are of dun-coloured stock,

this tendency to striping about the fore-legs may be frequently observed, especially in the young animals. The Norwegian pony appears to me to belong to an ancient, unimproved stock, probably of Asiatic descent. The Kattywar breed of horses in North-West India is, says Darwin, so generally striped, that a horse without stripes is not considered purely bred. The spine is always striped, the legs are generally barred, and a shoulder stripe (sometimes double and treble) is common. The young of the domestic ass is, as we all know, frequently and persistently striped about the fore-legs. Wild asses from North-East Africa have the same characteristic, especially in Somaliland. In his *Origin of Species* Darwin further points out that this tendency to revert to striping is most strongly displayed in hybrids, bred from the most distinct species; and the tendency in hybrids to revert to an original and far removed stock is well established. Mules, especially, display stripings, or zebra-like markings, about the legs with the greatest persistency.

A well-known and remarkable case of this over-powering tendency was displayed in a famous hybrid bred by Lord Norton. This mule was the product of a union between a male quagga (*Equus quagga*) and a nearly pure-bred chestnut Arabian mare. The foal bore stripes "more strongly defined and darker than those on the legs of the quagga." More

curious still, the same chestnut mare was afterwards put to a black sire of Arab blood, and threw two colts, both of which were strongly striped on the legs, while one of them had in addition stripes on the neck and body. Again, Darwin instances a hybrid bred at Knowsley from a female wild ass (*Asinus indicus*) by a male domestic donkey, in which not only were all four legs conspicuously striped, but there were three short stripes on each shoulder, and some zebra-like stripes on the face![1] This subject of stripings and markings is, in connection with the equine race alone, a very large and very interesting one, and deserves to be more widely followed up. Finally, to quote Darwin, "we must admit that the progenitor (of the equine group) was striped on the legs, shoulders, and face, and probably over the whole body, like a zebra."

All these facts tend very strongly to demonstrate that the zebras of Africa are handsome examples of a very ancient and very early type of the pure equine race. In these modern days the zebras, with their perfect forms and magnificent markings, stand apart from their fellows, the proud remnants of an ancient primeval stock, true children of nature and of the wilds, untouched and unimproved by the hand of man, yet challenging comparison in many respects with the highest types of modern domesti-

[1] *Animals and Plants under Domestication.*

cation. The pity of it is that they are so fast disappearing; so that another few score years will probably see the end of them. When one reflects how rapidly this ancient and interesting group is vanishing; when one remembers that the quagga (*Equus quagga*), which so lately as 1837 was described by Cornwallis Harris as "inhabiting the open plains south of the Vaal river in immense herds," has now for years become extinct—clean wiped from the face of the earth—one regrets almost that arms of precision were ever invented.

Of the striped *equidæ*, or zebras, peculiar to Africa, there are four well-ascertained species: viz. 1. The true or mountain zebra (*Equus zebra*); 2. Grèvy's zebra (*Equus grevyi*), a recently-discovered species of upland zebra from North-East Africa; 3. Burchell's zebra (*Equus burchelli*); and 4. The quagga (*Equus quagga*), a form now unhappily extinct. These species stand distinct and separate in many characteristics, and, although manifestly allied, it is a curious fact in natural history that in the wild state they have never been known to interbreed. The zebra, although known to the arena of Imperial Rome under the designation *Hippotigris* (tiger-horse), is, curiously enough, not to be found portrayed on Egyptian monuments. Considering how fond the Egyptians were of reproducing many forms of beasts, birds, and reptiles upon their monu-

ments, and the nearness of their land to habitats of the zebra, this is somewhat remarkable. The giraffe once or twice appears, but the zebra, so far as we can learn, never; and this although the lion, and many kinds of antelope, as well as other animals, are to be found frequently displayed. The name zebra is undoubtedly of African origin, and is supposed to have been derived or corrupted from Zeuru, Zeora, or Zecora, native North-East African names.

The earliest glimpse of the animal in history reaches us from the reign of Caracalla, when a *hippotigris*—together with an elephant, a rhinoceros, and a tiger—was displayed in the amphitheatre. In the time of Philip the Arabian, a later Emperor, A.D. 244, twenty zebras were displayed together. After the Roman Empire, little or nothing can be gleaned of this interesting beast until comparatively recent times. Tachard, a Jesuit priest, who sojourned at the Cape on his way to Siam soon after the middle of the seventeenth century, makes mention of the animal under the name *Zembra*. He evidently obtained his particulars at second hand, for his woodcuts are monstrosities, and his descriptions wildly ludicrous. The early Cape Dutch christened the mountain zebra *Wilde paard* (wild horse), and the quagga *Wilde esel* (wild ass); and Tachard flounders terribly in consequence. He says: "There are both horses and asses here o‹

extraordinary beauty. The first have a very little head and pretty long ears; they are all covered over with black and white streaks that reach from their back to their belly, about four or five fingers broad." Here the mountain zebra is evidently intended, and the description is not unlike. But, passing to the *Wilde esel* (quagga), Tachard reproduces nothing but fancy or false report: "As for the asses, they are of all colours. They have a long blue list that reaches from head to tail; the body being like that of the horse, full of broad streaks—blue, yellow, green, black, and white, all very lively." Poor Tachard! the early Dutch settlers had evidently hoaxed him, unless his imagination ran away with him! Kolben, who was at the Cape in the first decade of 1700, also trusts to his ears and not to his eyes in describing the zebra or quagga. He too speaks of the Cape wild ass as streaked with "white, blue, and chestnut." Kolben's woodcut of the zebra is nothing but the figure of a stout pony, striped, and carrying a flowing mane and tail. Too evidently Kolben's portrait was, like his written description, purely an effort of imagination.

Now and again we get in bygone days other brief mention of the zebra. Tellez informs us that the Great Mogul paid 2000 ducats for a specimen. Nauendorf relates that the Governor of Batavia, to whom a zebra had been presented by an Abyssinian

ambassador, despatched the animal as a gift to the Emperor of China, who in his turn sent the Dutch East India Company 10,000 *tael* of silver and thirty nightgowns, valued altogether at 160,000 crowns. About the middle of the last century a living example of the true zebra, the property of Frederick, Prince of Wales, son of George II, was kept at Kew. There is an excellent cut of this animal in Brook's *Natural History*, clearly showing it to be the mountain zebra (*Equus zebra*); and the animal no doubt came from the Dutch settlement at the Cape of Good Hope. About this time (1742) the Cape authorities issued an order prohibiting the destruction of zebras in their settlements, under a penalty of £10; and they were then offering premiums of £20 each for young animals delivered in Cape Town. As a general rule, however (notwithstanding the Kew zebra, Brook's *Natural History*, and the reports of occasional travellers from the Cape), so little was known about the zebra, even towards the latter end of the last century, that at furriers' shops in Europe the skins were sold as "sea-horse hides."

Sparrmann, the Swedish traveller, who explored the Cape interior in 1772, is one of the first to give us any accurate intelligence of the zebra and quagga. Mr. Barrow (afterwards Sir John Barrow of the Admiralty), secretary to Earl Macartney, Governor at the Cape in 1797, adds some very interesting in-

formation concerning both the zebra and quagga in Cape Colony. Then Burchell, in 1812, penetrated with his wagons beyond the Orange River, and discovered the zebra of the plains, ever since known as Burchell's zebra, roaming the vast plateaux-lands of the Bechuana country in immense herds; and the striped *equidæ* of Southern Africa were at last established and known to science. Curiously enough, it was not until nearly seventy years later that the mountain zebra of North-East Africa (*Equus grevyi*), from the highlands of Shoa, was identified by naturalists—a very singular lapse, considering the marvellous opening up of Africa in recent times, and the fact that Abyssinia—which adjoins Shoa—has been long known to Europeans.

The true or mountain zebra (*Equus zebra*), the *hippotigris* of the Romans, the *daow* of the Hottentots, the *wilde paard* of the Boers, is essentially a mountain dweller, and loves the wildest, roughest, and most inaccessible parts of the rugged mountains of South Africa. It is, so far as we know at present, unrepresented in Central Africa, and in North-East Africa is replaced by a somewhat similar form in Grèvy's zebra. From constant persecution this species is becoming very scarce, and promises not long hence to become, like its much-lamented cousin, the quagga, extinct altogether. In the old days this handsome and remarkable beast ran plentifully in large troops

upon every mountain range of Southern Africa, from Great Namaqualand to Swaziland. Now, alas! only a scanty remnant—a few small troops here and there—linger in the Cape Colony, in the ranges of Sneeuwberg, Witteberg, Tandtjesberg, Zwartberg, the Winterhoek, and one or two other localities, where as far as possible they are preserved. Few, if any, remain, to the mountains of Great Namaqualand, where Sir James Alexander found them sixty years ago in large numbers. A few still linger in the Drakensberg and Lebombo (Swaziland), in the south-eastern corner of the continent. Most unhappily, preservation in a vast and thinly populated country is very difficult; native and Dutch gunners *will* shoot for skins, or the mere love of slaughter; and, despite the efforts of English colonists at the Cape, the rare mountain zebra of South Africa year by year dwindles towards extinction. Within thirty years it will probably have vanished, and another noble form of animal life will be lost to us.

I first set eyes on the mountain zebra some years since in a wild and remote range—the Witteberg—in the eastern part of Cape Colony, between Graaff Reinet and the coast-line. In company with a Kaffir hunter I came suddenly upon a small troop guarded by a sentinel—an old stallion. They were a magnificent spectacle, far up in a precipitous piece of savage mountain scenery. We had a long look at

them at two hundred and fifty yards' distance, and then suddenly the stallion got our wind or espied us, a wild neigh of alarm was given, and the troop, with tails whisking, tore headlong over the mountain and quickly disappeared. It was a gallant and never-to-be-forgotten spectacle. I saw the same troop on a subsequent occasion, but not to such advantage. The mountain zebra is of strong and robust form, furnished with short, sturdy limbs—clean, tough, and wiry—and excellent feet. In general appearance, and especially in its ears and tail, it is much more asinine in type than either Burchell's zebra or the quagga. In colouring and marking, too, it differs widely from the others of the zebra group. The body-colour is of a clean silvery white ; the markings are black, or very dark brown, extending to every part of the body except the belly, and are very differently distributed. A glance at the *Royal Natural History*, which gives portraits of this and the other zebras, will at once show the wide variation in shape and markings. The legs are perfectly and strongly banded down even to the hoofs. The muzzle is of a handsome tan colour, while the rest of the head—except the ears, which are black and white—is striped in bright brown instead of black. This zebra stands from 12 to 12½ hands in height, and is, from its strong and sturdy build, manifestly adapted for getting about the rocky mountain ranges it loves to frequent. Although, as

a rule, its constitution is hardy enough, it will sometimes succumb to the snowstorms which occasionally occur upon the mountain heights. Quite recently, after a heavy fall and severe cold on the mountains, near Cradock, in Cape Colony, several zebras were found dead. The altitudes of the mountains of South Africa in which this zebra is still found range from 2000 to 7000 feet.

In the old days the young of this zebra were occasionally captured and exported to Mauritius, where they were driven in fashionable equipages. But as a rule this species is far more intractable than its relative, the Burchell's zebra. In the adult animals ferocity is strongly marked, and taming is out of the question. Pringle mentions a young Boer who had driven a zebra to the edge of a precipice, with the intention of forcing it over and securing the skin. The beast turned upon the hunter, seized his foot in its teeth, and severed it from the leg, inflicting so dreadful a wound that the unfortunate young man died a few days later. Barrow instances the case of a soldier who was thrown by a half-tamed zebra, which then bit the unfortunate man's ear clean off, as he lay stunned upon the ground. A stallion, the last survivor of the troop seen by myself in Witteberg, was afterwards kraaled and captured by my friends, and fastened by ropes to a tree. Every effort was made to keep it alive and feed it. It displayed

the most untamable ferocity, biting savagely and rushing open-mouthed at its captors, and refusing all food. It drank quantities of water, but finally died of inanition. Of course, such a mature animal was hopelessly untamable, and should have been set free again. On the other hand, Captain Hayes[1] speaks of a true zebra which a few years since was displayed in a circus, and was mounted and ridden by Mrs. Hayes. The animal seems to have been utterly unamenable to the bit, however.

Very few examples of this zebra have been seen in the Zoological Society's Gardens; nearly all those zebras displayed there being of Burchell's species, with which form the public is therefore most familiar. A female was placed there in 1851, and a male in 1858; but there was subsequently a long period during which no examples were on view. Within the last few years two excellent specimens of the mountain zebra (male and female) were again to be seen in the Gardens. Most unfortunately those animals both died within a year or two of their arrival—I believe of influenza, caught, it was supposed, from the prevailing epidemic—and it will be long, I fear, before such fine examples are again to be seen in England. These zebras were in adjacent boxes to the Burchell's zebras, and their relative points and distinctions could be very quickly noted. The pace of this

[1] Author of *Illustrated Horse-breaking*, etc.

interesting mountain-dweller is, on the flat, of course, inferior to that of a fair horse; but in its own habitat it is as a rule utterly unapproachable: even the surest-footed Basuto pony that ever clattered down a mountain-side could never hope to rival this wild equine mountaineer. Occasionally, however, a zebra will consort with a troop of donkeys or mules running among the hills, and is then sometimes driven into a kraal and made prisoner. Some years ago a mountain zebra, taken in this way, was photographed at Graaff Reinet. I was fortunate enough to secure a copy of this, I believe, the only portrait extant of a mature mountain zebra captured in the wild state.

As Grèvy's zebra is rather a hill than a plain dweller, and is most nearly allied to the true zebra, I will deal next with that species. In 1882, Menelek, King of Shoa, now King of Abyssinia and Shoa, sent a living zebra as a present to M. Grèvy, President of the French Republic. This zebra was placed in the Jardin des Plantes, where it survived only for a short time. It was soon found to differ considerably from any recorded species, and was at first thought to be merely a variety of *Equus zebra;* careful examination of the skins of other zebras collected from North-East Africa—principally Somaliland—has, however, clearly established this zebra—now well known as *Equus grevyi*—as a true species, distinct from its southern relative.

In this zebra the body-colour is of the same pure white as *Equus zebra*, but the dark markings are much thinner, finer, and more evenly distributed. Across the rump and quarters of the true zebra the markings are broad and few in number; in Grèvy's zebra they are thin and more numerous. In fact, the stripings are pretty even in width all over the body. Again, the marking upon the top of the rump is quite different, a broad space of white appearing on either side of the dark central list in Grèvy's zebra. In the original Grèvy's zebra the nose was longer, more pronounced, and more ugly than in the true zebra, while the body and limbs were less compact and robust. The ears were long and asinine, and the tail donkey-like, as in *Equus zebra*.[1]

The first example of this new zebra was captured in the mountains of Shoa. Captain Swayne, who has shot specimens of this animal in the adjacent country of Somaliland, clearly confirms the species and adds some interesting information. He tells us that they were common on the border of the Galla country, and were never found in the open grass plains, but always on "low plateaux covered with scattered or thick thorn-bush and tall, feathery

[1] The examples of Grèvy's zebra now in the Natural History Museum seem to show that this is quite the largest of the whole group. The size of the ears is very remarkable.

'churr' grass, with red gravelly soil and rocks cropping up now and then." They were found in herds of under a dozen, were extremely tame, and easily shot. The stripes of adult specimens only approach "intense black" over the withers; elsewhere they are of a very deep chocolate colour, changing to light tan on the forehead and muzzle. Out of the skins of some two hundred zebras seen by Captain Swayne alive, all were of the same narrow type of striping (as in the original Grèvy's zebra) and showed no variation of pattern.[1]

This new and very interesting species is now plainly established; the wonder is that not until so late a period as between 1880 and 1890 has it been discovered and recorded. Grèvy's zebra appears to run in small troops of much the same number as the mountain zebra of South Africa, and the nature of its habitat—bush, grass, and rock—is very similar. Its range is evidently somewhat lower; but here it may be pointed out that the zebra of South Africa has most probably sought the higher, rougher, and more inaccessible parts of its mountains in proportion as it has been persecuted by man. Probably Grèvy's zebra in Gallaland and Somaliland will, now that it has been "discovered," and that the natives find a ready market for the skins, and therefore begin to pursue it systematically, retreat

[1] Letter to the *Field*, August 5, 1893.

in the same manner to higher and wilder fastnesses among the mountains. It is to be hoped that before long we shall see living examples of this zebra, as well as of its South African congener, in the Zoological Society's Gardens.

Next on my list stands the Burchell's zebra (*Equus burchelli*), the *Bonte quagga* of the Boers and *Peetsi* (sometimes *Peetsi tolatsan*) of the Bechuanas. The Cape Dutch name for this quadruped—*Bonte quagga* (pied or striped quagga)—is a wrongful and misleading one, and, from having been adopted by nearly all interior hunters and traders, has given rise to much doubt and confusion among naturalists. Among natives there was only one quagga, or rather *Quacha* (a pure Hottentot name) in the country—the now extinct *Equus quagga*, which never ranged north of the Vaal river. Unfortunately the Boer misnomer has stuck to Burchell's zebra, and whenever up-country people refer to this animal they term it almost invariably "quagga" for short. The mistake has been repeated in books of travel by several authors, and for this simple reason many people at home have doubted whether the true quagga was really extinct after all. Burchell's zebra, which, from its frequency in European zoological collections, is quite the best known of the family, is taller than the true zebra, and stands about thirteen hands in height—

occasionally a little more. The body-colour varies from pale sienna to white or almost white; the stripings, which differ entirely from those of the true zebra, are black or brownish-black. The head is light and handsome, and with the small ears appears more equine than asinine. The mane is erect and full, coming well over the forehead, and is banded alternately in black, or dark brown, and white. The tail is also much more equine than in the true zebra, and is whitish and flowing. The legs of this zebra, as with all its kin in the wild state, are clean, hard, and perfectly formed. One never finds a "crock" or a lame one—except from wounds—among a troop; and the feet are models of perfection—small, clean, perfectly shaped, and hard as flint—and are evidently peculiarly adapted to the high dry plains upon which these animals make their homes. Burchell's zebras can gallop very well and very fast; and several times, in tail-on-end chases across the plains, I have had to relinquish pursuit as hopeless, although well enough mounted for the South African veldt. The Cape hunting-pony is, however, always severely handicapped on these occasions, with its burden of a heavy man, rifle, and equipments. On level terms, a fair horse would, I think, always beat the fastest zebra that ever scoured the plains. In many instances the markings in this zebra extend but

little below the shoulder, the legs being unstriped. Cases often occur, however, in which the legs are striped nearly down to the hoofs—though never so perfectly as in the true zebra. When these leg-stripings occur, naturalists sometimes refer to the animal as Chapman's variety of Burchell's zebra—Chapman having been the first person to bring out skins thus marked. It may be doubted, however, whether *Equus chapmani*, as it is sometimes called, can really be set up as a true variety.

The habitat of Burchell's zebra has always been far wider and less circumscribed than that of other members of the Hippotigrine group. It is uncertain whether these animals ever roamed south of the Orange River; though from *Paterson's Travels*—*circa* 1777—there is strong presumptive evidence that troops were then found just south of the river. But in modern times the range may be taken as extending from the Orange River to Northern Equatorial Africa. In Central and East Africa they are abundant, especially on the dry plains about Masailand and the Kilimanjaro region, and towards Uganda, where their habitat is almost exactly identical with the high plains and park-like plateaux of Southern Africa. In Northern and Western Africa they seem to have been always unknown.

But although in East and South Central Africa

this zebra may still be found in large troops, its range becomes yearly more restricted. The Boers of South Africa first discovered the marketable value of zebra and quagga skins, and in consequence the plains of the Orange Free State and Transvaal, where scores upon scores of thousands of these quadrupeds were to be found forty or fifty years since, are now completely denuded of them. In all the Transvaal, I know of only one farm (in the Marico district) where a few remaining Burchell's zebras are carefully preserved—by an Englishman—the poor remnant of the immense herds of these beautiful creatures, which up to the middle of this century decorated all that vast region.

In going up-country at the present time one has to cross the Kalahari and strike the Botletli river before one can find these animals. There, and from thence to the Zambesi, they may still be found in fair numbers. In Mashonaland, and eastward to the coast, they are still plentiful—especially about the Pungwe river; but miners, pioneers, and hunters are already at work in this region, and the game is going fast. The zebra is easily shot, and, once wounded, turns out from the troop and is soon secured. It appears to be, next to the eland, the softest of all the South African game, which as a rule are endowed with intense vitality. By far the handsomest of the zebra family—indeed, one may say of the whole

equine race—this zebra is being ruthlessly cleared from Africa, solely for the value of its hide, or to provide food for natives, or for the sheer pleasure of slaying. It is quite the most easily tamed of the group, and in many instances might be of considerable assistance to man in traversing country infected by the deadly horse-sickness, or by the still more fatal Tse-Tse fly.

It is a pleasure to find that quite lately in the Transvaal an experiment has been made in taming this zebra with a fair measure of success. Messrs. Zeederberg, the contractors for a line of coaches running from Pretoria to Pietersburg, bought in 1893 eight half-grown Burchell's zebras from a Boer hunter named Groblaar, for the purpose of running them in their coach during the horse-sickness season, which follows the rains. Groblaar had lassoed them when quite young, four months before. Four of these were broken to harness in a month, and were then run in the coach alongside six mules with perfect success. A photograph of the team, inspanned, together with an account of the proceedings, appeared in the *Field* of March 11, 1893, and were extremely interesting. These zebras were described as "perfectly quiet and well trained. In harness they pull well, and are willing, and never jib. In fact, one of them will do his best to pull the whole coach himself. They are softer-mouthed

than the mules. They never kick, and the only thing in the shape of vice which they manifest is that, when first handled, they have an inclination to bite; but as soon as they understand there is no intention to hurt them they give it up."

This extremely interesting experiment was followed up, and during the autumn of 1893 sixteen more young Burchell's zebras were brought in from the interior by Dutch hunters. They seemed to have become perfectly tame by the time they reached Zoutpansberg, North Transvaal, and were forthwith broken to harness or saddle. I regret to say that the subsequent career of these tamed zebras was not a success. It was found, after all, that they were not fitted for prolonged coach or mail-cart work. They were more trouble than horses and mules, and the same amount of work could not be got from them. After a time, therefore, the experiment was abandoned. Those put under saddle and bridle proved equally disappointing.

On the other hand, it is interesting to note that the Hon. Walter Rothschild has a team of Burchell's zebras now in use in England. They are well broken, and are often to be seen in harness at Tring Park, Hertfordshire, as well as in London. Herr Wolff, too, has been very successful in breaking and training four of these zebras, which were exhibited during the winter of 1895-96, in the circus at

the Crystal Palace. These animals displayed great docility and quickness in their various performances. The failure of zebras in Transvaal coach work is scarcely surprising. It is not to be expected that animals taken fresh from the wilderness will at once display the same capacity for severe and prolonged labour as quadrupeds like the horse, ass, and mule, which have undergone a gradual process of domestication and training during thousands of years.

I know of no handsomer or more characteristic figure in the South African veldt than this splendid creature, the Burchell's zebra. With its clean, sleek coat, shining in the sunlight like a well-groomed horse's, its flowing tail, rich colouring, graceful mane, perfectly hogged by nature, and beautiful head, it forms a noble picture, framed in its usual setting of grassy plain, or park-like, open bush veldt. Often when in pursuit, at a signal from the big stallion bringing up the rear, I have seen the flying troop suddenly wheel round in line, and stand with heads up, ears pricked, and distended nostrils, to stare for a full half-minute at their disturbers. Then, with curvets, prancings, and whirling tails, away again they scour, perfect types of feral beauty! Not seldom you may see them with their constant allies the brindled gnus; with perhaps a troop of ostriches to fill up the company. If these noble creatures can but be saved from extinction, and trained for

the service of man in Africa, it will be one redeeming feature in the melancholy tale of a disappearing fauna.

The true quagga—*Quacha* of the Hottentots, *Equus quagga* of scientists—now, alas! quite extinct—is the last of the four species of striped *equidæ* till lately found in Africa. In height this animal nearly resembled Burchell's zebra, standing from 13 to 13½ hands. It was, however, of rather more robust form. In colouring and marking the quagga differed widely from the others of the group; the upper colouring of the body being pale rufous-brown—darker upon the neck and face—while the dark brown stripings extended only as far as the barrel, or a little behind the shoulder, after which they entirely ceased. The ears and tail were more equine than asinine (the tail being white and flowing); the muzzle was black; the crest high, well arched, and surmounted by a full upstanding mane banded in brown and white. A dark dorsal line ran to the tail. The legs and belly were almost pure white, and unstriped.

Years ago, when I first visited Cape Colony, I took a good deal of trouble to ascertain the life-history of this animal. I found that it had been extinct for some years, probably since 1865-70 in Cape Colony, and a little later in the Orange Free State. In 1889 I contributed an article to the *Field*, pointing

out this fact, and giving information as to the habits and habitat of this interesting species. This has often been cited since. The quagga's habitat was, stated briefly, the Cape Colony, the Orange Free State, and part of Griqualand West. It seldom wandered north of the Vaal river, and its curiously restricted range is only another of those puzzles of geographical distribution which have so long perplexed naturalists. In 1837 Cornwallis Harris found the quagga inhabiting the plains south of the Vaal river in immense herds. The Boers of the northern portion of Cape Colony and of the Orange Free State have since that time so utterly exterminated the species—merely for the sake of obtaining a few miserable shillings for each skin—that not a single specimen now remains. The quagga is completely extinct, and has been for more than twenty years past. It is a thousand pities. You may destroy, but you can never again restore a species such as this.

No hunter will ever again see this unique and striking quadruped thunder in dense battalions and amid clouds of dust across the vast plains and karroos of Southern Africa. Never again will the traveller view its strange single-file march silhouetted against the distant sky-line. The quagga, that for many a thousand years decorated those primeval wilds and untrodden deserts, has clean vanished, never to return

—recklessly destroyed by the short-sighted policy of the skin-hunting Boers of the last generation.

Only two specimens of the quagga have been exhibited in the Regent's Park Gardens—one, a female, in 1851, the other, a male, in 1858. This last was presented by that enthusiastic collector, Sir George Grey, then Governor of Cape Colony. The animal was a familiar figure in the Gardens (I remember it well as a boy), and survived until 1872 or a little later. In 1872 some photographs of this quagga (the only sun-pictures of a true quagga extant) were taken by Mr. Frederick York, who possesses five negatives—which, now that the animal is extinct, may be termed priceless. Very unfortunately, the Natural History Museum has no representative stuffed specimen; it possesses merely an old and extremely battered skin, which has been lately set up; so that, altogether, the world possesses very little direct evidence of the existence of this rare and now extinct creature, which forty or fifty years ago roamed its native plains in unnumbered thousands.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WHITE RHINOCEROS

Mr. Coryndon's two specimens—Rarity of this species—Discovered by Burchell—Restricted habitat—Former abundance—Easily shot—Recent re-discovery of white rhinoceroses in Zululand—Six shot in 1894—Description and habits of the animal—Immense bulk—Oswell's adventure—Curious trait of mother with young—Feeding habits—Plentiful in Oswell's time—Six shot within a quarter of a mile—Too numerous to be pleasant—Feathered allies—Excellent sentinels—Rhinoceros' appetite—The last of the race.

THE arrival early in 1894 of Mr. R. T. Coryndon from Matabeleland had considerable interest for naturalists. That gentleman brought with him the entire skins and skeletons of two species of the great white rhinoceros, a species now in the last throes of extinction. How rare the white rhinoceros has become may be gauged from the fact that for years Mr. Selous—that most enthusiastic hunter-naturalist—has been endeavouring to procure a specimen for the Natural History Museum, without success. No white rhinoceros has ever been shown alive in Europe, although its black congener is pretty well

known; and hitherto the species had been represented only by a few of the immensely long fore-horns and one complete head. There is another complete head in the Cape Town Museum—the head of the last ever shot by Mr. Selous. No better instance of the alarming rate at which the great fauna of the world are being exterminated can be furnished than the case of the white rhinoceros. Like many other South African animals, this rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros simus*, first discovered by Dr. Burchell in 1812) had a singularly restricted habitat. Its modern range has invariably been between the Orange River and the Zambesi, and it has never been found north of the latter river. There can be little doubt, I think, that, prior to the beginning of this century, this enormous terrestrial mammal—the greatest of known creatures after the elephant—wandered upon the great grassy plains of Bushmanland (a continuation of the Kalahari Desert), just south of the Orange River. Native tradition has it so. And Mr., afterwards Sir John, Barrow, a very competent observer and painstaking naturalist, who explored the Cape in 1797, expressly mentions at p. 395 of his excellent *Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa* that this animal was "not uncommon on the skirts of the Colony behind the Hantam Mountains, and seems to be a variety only of the African two-horned rhinoceros." The district men-

tioned by Barrow is some way south of the Orange River. But at all events later Europeans have never encountered this rhinoceros south of the Orange. Burchell and other travellers found the great beast roaming the plains of Bechuanaland and the adjacent countries in vast numbers. Dr. Andrew Smith, during the scientific expedition sent out by the British Government in 1835, saw immense numbers of rhinoceroses, black and white. Cornwallis Harris and other African travellers had similar experiences of the abundance of both species. But rhinoceroses are, as a rule, pretty easily slain. They are sluggish, and possess poor eyesight, and trust for their protection mainly to their sense of smell. Often they were shot dead while fast asleep in their mid-day siesta. Gordon Cumming, Andersson, and scores of other hunters of the middle of this century used to shoot them in large numbers as they came to drink by night at desert pools and fountains. During the dry season there were collected at these scant watering-places all sorts of animals from an immense area of country, and night shooters made proportionately big bags. Oswell and Vardon killed in one season eighty-nine black and white rhinoceroses: Andersson some sixty in a similar period. This sort of thing, which was eagerly carried on by all hunters, European, Boer, and native, whenever opportunity occurred, could not last for ever; and, thanks to the

wanton and wasteful slaughter of those days, there are now to be found very few black rhinoceroses south of the Zambesi; while the white rhinoceros is, if not already quite extinct, just on the point of extinction. It has been well known to South African hunters for the last few years that probably the last representatives of this great mammal would be found, if anywhere, in some remote and difficult country in a corner of North-east Mashonaland. Here Mr. Coryndon procured his specimens. The skins and skeletons were preserved with infinite trouble, and now—thanks to Mr. Coryndon's energy and care—decorate the collections of the Natural History Museum and of the Rothschild Museum at Tring. Thus—with an example forwarded by Mr. Varndell—have the only three complete specimens of this interesting mammal been rescued for future generations. Mr. Selous and most other South African hunters supposed with some confidence that this portion of Mashonaland would prove to be absolutely the last home of the white rhinoceros. At the end of 1894, however, there came tidings that some few of these immense creatures still existed in the low, inaccessible, tsetse-fly-haunted country between the lower courses of the Black and White Umvolosi rivers, Zululand. Here are dense reed-beds and much jungle and cover, to which, evidently, the last remnant of the white rhinoceros

of this region have betaken themselves. It is to be feared they cannot long survive, even in that unhealthy, fever-stricken bit of country, dangerous though it is to the white hunter. From a letter to the *Field* in November 1894, written by Mr. C. L. Leatham of Zululand, it seems that during that year more than six specimens of *Rhinoceros simus* were shot between these rivers, two of them falling to the rifles of a well-known hunter, Mr. C. R. Varndell. Of these two, one, an excellent specimen, carrying a three-foot fore-horn, has been preserved. South Africa has been so ransacked by big game hunters, that it is now hardly likely that any fresh discoveries of these gigantic mammals will again be made. Nor is it probable that the few specimens (if any) still remaining in life will enjoy any prolonged immunity.

The white rhinoceros differed mainly from its black cousin (*Rhinoceros bicornis*), the common African rhinoceros, in its much greater size and bulk, its enormously long fore-horn, immense and disproportionate head, and square blunt upper-lip. The black rhinoceros, which feeds upon bushes and shrubs, has a pendent or prehensile upper-lip. The white rhinoceros, which fed always upon grasses, and therefore needed no prehensile lip, can be at once and easily distinguished by this striking difference in the upper-lip. The length of the fore-horn, in the case of the white rhinoceros, was sometimes

enormous—there are instances in which the measurement of 4 ft. 6 in. has been recorded; sometimes the horn projected almost laterally from the snout, in true unicorn fashion. The bulk of this mighty beast was immense. A mature specimen stood 6 ft. 6 in. in height, and measured 14 ft. to 15 ft. in length, and weighed, probably, some four tons or more. Even the African elephant, from the comparative shortness of its body, although standing much taller, bulked scarcely larger than the white rhinoceros. Although usually harmless and inoffensive, this rhinoceros was, when roused or wounded, a dangerous foe. Mr. Oswell, the friend and companion of Livingstone, had an extraordinary escape from the charge of one of these monsters, which attacked his horse, drove its horn clean through the animal's body, and tossed horse and rider over its head. The horse, of course, was killed; Mr. Oswell himself escaped with a wound and a terrible shaking. Although called white, this rhinoceros varied little in colour from its black relative. In both the colour is a dirty brown; the white rhinoceros being, perhaps, a trifle paler. This great square-mouthed rhinoceros always carried its huge, disproportionate head very low—so low, indeed, that in numerous instances the fore-horn touched the earth, and its under surface became worn away and flattened. Gordon Cumming seems to have been

the first to mention a curious trait exhibited by this rhinoceros—a trait noticed also by Selous in his first book, *A Hunter's Wanderings in Africa*. When hunters are at hand and danger threatens the mother and young calf of this species, the calf runs just in front of the mother's snout, and is guided in its course by the long fore-horn, which is pressed against its sides as it runs. This very singular and interesting demonstration of motherly affection is very well shown in an illustration towards the end of Gordon Cumming's book, *The Lion Hunter in South Africa*.

The "Wit Rhinoster," as the Boers called it, fed always upon grass, and was to be found therefore usually upon grassy plains, or, as in so much of the Bechuana country, in open forest where grass was plentiful. The broad square muzzle of this animal was manifestly adapted specially for this sort of food. The black rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros bicornis*), on the other hand, feeds invariably upon bush and shrubs, for the seizing of which its prehensile upper-lip is exactly designed.

For untold ages of the past these mighty mammals must have grazed peacefully and contentedly in their South African habitat. The spears and bows and arrows of the native were weapons not greatly to be feared, for the rhinoceros has a tough hide an inch and a half in thickness, and in consequence

was little harassed by the black man. It feared neither the lion nor any other of the carnivora, except in its youngest state of calfdom, and even then it had always a sufficiently formidable mother to protect it.

The numbers of these great creatures to be found in South Africa even fifty years ago must have been very great. Cornwallis Harris speaks of them in 1837 as "very common in the interior." Oswell, who hunted from 1844 to 1851, speaks of seeing them in herds of six and eight, and of once, when in need of meat for natives, having slain six within a quarter of a mile with single balls. Oswell was a man of scrupulous integrity and honour, and his testimony, like Selous', is absolutely to be relied upon. Often he and his party had to drive the great beasts from their vicinity, before outspanning for the night. The animals appeared to mistake the wagons for living creatures, and were most troublesome in their attentions. Gordon Cumming mentions having seen as many as twelve feeding together in a patch of young grass. As a general rule, however, the white rhinoceros may be said to have wandered singly or in pairs. The whole country, in the time of Harris, Oswell, and Gordon Cumming, held so many of the kind, that they were to be seen in the numbers I have mentioned.

Stupid, sleepy, short-sighted, and easily approached

as were these rhinoceroses in the golden days of South African sport, they yet had in addition to their own keen powers of scent a very constant ally and friend—a friend found, too, almost always in attendance upon the black rhinoceros. This was the well-known rhinoceros-bird (*Buphaga erythrorynchа*), that starling which, as I have mentioned, frequently accompanies the rhinoceros, as well as buffalo and domestic cattle, in small flocks, for the sake of the ticks and other parasites that infest them. These rhinoceros-birds are of a brownish-black colour, with red bills; they undoubtedly warn the rhinoceros when danger approaches by alighting on his head or back, striking him with their bills, and uttering sharp cries—warnings which are never neglected. Many a dull beast has been saved in this way by the timely admonition of these feathered friends.

The white rhinoceros seems to have put on much more flesh than his cousin *bicornis*, who never seems to attain any great degree of fatness. Selous states that in the autumn and winter months of Africa (March till August) the square-mouthed rhinoceros was usually very fat, and that its meat, especially the hump, was then most excellent. The appetite of a wild rhinoceros must, like that of an elephant, be a pretty capacious one. In captivity the daily food allowance of one of these creatures seems to be, roughly, "one truss of straw, three-quarters of a

truss of clover, one quart of rice, half a bushel of beans, and twenty to twenty-four gallons of water." Assisted by the free range and wholesome exercise of the desert, a wild rhinoceros could no doubt put away much more even than this ample allowance. The white rhinoceros, by the way, like its black congener, always drank at night, usually between the hours of nine and twelve.

There can, I fear, be little doubt that this rare and interesting quadruped will within the next two or three years have become quite exterminated—a creature of the past. Naturalists have to thank the Hon. Walter Rothschild, who commissioned Mr. Coryndon, for his enterprise and generosity; as well as that hunter himself and Mr. Varndell for their skill and success in procuring the first—and probably the last—complete specimens of this mammal, before its final extinction.

CHAPTER XIV

SPRINGBOKS ON A SALT-PAN

Ngamiland and its salt-pans—Wonderful mirage—Mistake of Oswell and Livingstone—Chukutsa Pan—Former plenty of wild animals—Salt-pans still haunted by game—Beloved by springboks—Early morning in the desert—A blue Wildebeest—The salt-pan at sunrise—Springboks, their tricks and graces—Bird life—A shot for breakfast—The deserted Pan.

In the vast, little-known solitudes of Ngamiland there are few things more strange or more characteristic than those immense salt-pans which, like dead and silent seas, lie scattered round about the reed marshes of Lake Komadau and the lower reaches of the Botletli river. Livingstone, with his quick eye and unerring instinct, pointed to these salt-pans as the exhausted and dried-up remains of that great inland water, which, thousands of years ago—before the Zambesi had been torn from its southern course and deflected eastward—overspread all this part of Southern Africa. He pointed rightly to Lake Ngami as the last puddle of this once mighty lake. Since Livingstone's first discovery of Ngami in 1849 the truth of his early theory has become more and

more apparent to the few travellers and hunters who have visited this flat and desolate, yet interesting region.

"Salt-pan" (*zoutpan*) is a rough-and-ready name given to all such kindred formations by the South African Boers. But it is not to be supposed that pure salt is readily to be found upon all. Upon some pans, it is true—such as that of Groot Chwaing in British Bechuanaland—large quantities of good rough salt are collected, to be sold among up-country farmers. Upon others very beautiful masses of crystallized salt are to be found. These crystal lumps, formed by the steady evaporation of nature, are highly prized by the natives, who use them in their kraals, and carry them upon distant journeys. The commonest form of pan in Ngamiland shows after the rains a strong exudation of lime, which under the action of sun and wind mingles with the desert sand, and gives to the even floor of the pan the smoothest and most silvery appearance possible. During the rains the pans are covered with a few inches of water, and look like immense lakes. From May to November they are dry again. During this dry period of African winter and spring, when not a drop of rain may be expected to mar their surface, the salt-pans assume their most characteristic aspect. At this time the game come in to lick the brack, for which they have so keen a longing. Then the intense

heat, and the smooth white saline tracts, unite to form the most wonderful mirages that one can find in Africa. Shining waters, lovely islets, groves of trees and bush—all these appear to the human eye with every circumstance of truth and perfection. Livingstone himself and his fellow-discoverers of Lake Ngami were completely deceived by the vast salt-pan of N'Chukutsa, which they stumbled upon after crossing the waterless Kalahari. One emerges suddenly upon N'Chukutsa, which is some twenty miles round, after a long weary trek through dense Mopani forest. It was evening, and the setting sun threw a wonderful mirage upon the pan. It looked exactly like a lake. Oswell threw his hat in the air and gave a great cry; Livingstone and Murray came hurrying up; all thought they had found Ngami, the fabulous water of which they were in search. Alas! Lake Ngami lay still a weary 250 miles and more in front of them, and they were not to set eyes upon it for many days. We first rode across N'Chukutsa—Chukutsa it is now-a-days more commonly called—in the heat of noonday. Its mirage was wonderful. The water, the islands, the trees, the foliage, were so perfect that one might swear Nature's deception could go no further. But the weary ride over the great, dry, burning pan; the smarting dazzle cast up by its smooth, white floor; the suffocating heat, and the labour of riding and leading jaded horses and pack-

horses, were all real enough. We were in the middle of a spell of sixty-five miles of utterly waterless country, and we panted for the cool Lake river for which we were riding.

In Livingstone's time all this country of the salt-pans was black with game. No gun had then ever desecrated those remote solitudes. Now-a-days, alas! much of the nobler game has gone; the troops of elephants, the sour, bulky rhinoceroses, the thousands of buffalo, then frequenting the banks of the Lake river (Botletli),[1] all have vanished. The shy and timid giraffe, which in Livingstone's day and much later wandered to the very margin of the river, now never crosses the plain, but secludes itself in the dry sanctuaries of the Kalahari forest, twenty or thirty miles to the southward.

Yet though the native gunner, the Trek Boer, and the passing Englishman have driven off and destroyed the grander fauna, this primeval region is still a haunt of the more wary and less easily destroyed game. The rare roan antelope, the gemsbok, the koodoo, the hartebeest, and the ostrich still come at night and early morning to taste the salt brack. The grotesque brindled gnu and the beautifully painted Burchell zebra, and in pursuit of them the lion, still

[1] The Botletli is called, invariably, by hunters and traders of the interior, the "Lake river." It is connected in its upper course with Lake Ngami by a channel or arm of water.

wander over the pans, and leave their spoor upon the smooth white sand; and the fleeting springbok, the very acme and perfection of feral grace and motion, may be seen at all hours of the day. The springbok dearly loves a salt-pan; its presence adds a singular charm to these flat and dazzling expanses; and in no part of the boundless veldt of Southern Africa are the tricks, the graces, and the marvellous leaping powers of these matchless antelopes more perfectly displayed or more easily to be observed.

Let us stand by the side of a hunter at one of the smaller of these salt-pans. It is early morning in the desert, the air is sharp and clear; one may keep up one's coat collar for half-an-hour yet, and one's coat on for a good hour. It seems but a few minutes since the morning star sprang above the horizon, yet he is now climbing the sky at a pace that seems incredible. Yonder in the east, the great red disk of sun, now half upon the skyline, is painting the heavens most gorgeously. Upward he flings his rosy banners, which flaunt in the pale green sky far towards the zenith. Three hundred yards away there, to the right of the pan, lumbers an old blue wildebeest bull (brindled gnu), which has somehow got our wind, and is cantering off. Let him rip; it is a long, chancy shot, and we shall disturb the springbok. Poor old brute! he is a solitary, and now wanders the veldt alone, unless he can pick up company with an ostrich or two, or

some ancient, similarly exiled, hartebeest. He has been turned out of the troop by the young bulls, as old and worthless, and the days of his pride are gone. He is the rearguard of the game that drank at the river last night; the rest are already far across the plain, trekking for some safe pasturage many a mile away. But now, softly; let us peep through the screen of bush between us and the salt-pan. The springbok are there, surely enough—there must be two hundred of them scattered about the pan. The air is translucent; there is not a trace of mirage; at present you may watch the buck and their movements perfectly. What a picture it is! At this moment you shall not find a fairer desert-scene south of the Zambesi. Look through the glass, and you may note how the rising sun casts the long shadow of each dainty antelope far across the smooth white sand. Out there to the right there is some fun going on amongst that knot—"klompje" (a little clump) a Boer would call it—of a dozen. Two young rams are striking at each other. See! Some whim has seized the whole group, and they are leaping—leaping from sheer frolic and pleasure. Arching their backs, thrusting down their heads, elevating the curious fan-like blaze of snowy hair that runs down the back, and lies usually concealed, they spring sheer upward, with the impetus of india-rubber balls, eight or ten feet in air. The spring is made from all four feet

simultaneously, and the slender legs are stiffened. One buck repeats the leap several times running; then canters off for another part of the pan. He is followed by the rest of the "klompje." Nothing in nature can equal the wonderful agility, speed, sprightliness, and grace of these creatures. And upon this gleaming pan, at this clear hour of sunrise, they stand out in all their perfection; no mirror could display their points better. Some, as you may perceive, stand reflectively here and there. Some, with lowered heads and curiously mincing gait, trot lightly as things of air across the sand. Some are licking at a salt corner of the brack. Here, again, is another band suddenly startled into a leaping fit—"pronken" (pranks) the Boers well call these displays. Such a scene—enacted daily in old Africa these thousands of years past—is worth a year of a man's life in the seething town. Thank God! there are still a few such places of nature left to this poor harried earth of ours! Unhappily, even these cannot last many years longer. But time wears on; the sun grows warmer every instant; you may see the mirage just beginning to dance at the far corner of the pan. Yonder string of pelicans, half-a-mile in length, stretching out slowly into the desert, tells that the great fisher-birds have breakfasted and are off to digest their meal. The sand-grouse, streaming overhead towards the river, are flying for their morning drink—it must be nearing

eight o'clock. The brilliant rollers and the queer, bizarre hornbills in the bush behind us are busy; that troop of guinea-fowl crossing the open is off for its day of digging. It is time the hunter shot a buck and rode away. He has been watching, with keen enjoyment, for an hour. But, you will say, why destroy the beauty of the scene, the pure freedom of desert life? Alas! men must live. There is nothing at the wagons but zebra meat, uneatable by Europeans. The rifle goes up at the nearest buck, not much more than two hundred and twenty yards away. He is a fat ram, in high condition. With the glass you may note his gleaming rufous coat, the dark chestnut of his flank stripe, the snow-whiteness of his face and belly. He stands there the easiest shot on the pan.

The rifle cracks, the bullet strikes up the white sand beneath the antelope's belly, and ricochets far into the distance. The buck leaps high in air, and trots off. Steady! he is not much alarmed; there is commotion on the pan, but he will not go far yet. He trots jauntily thirty paces, then stands again. This time the bullet strikes home, just behind the shoulder. That terrific impact is too much even for the wonderful vitality of a springbok, and the ram lies there dead upon the pan. The hunter will have springbok fry for breakfast. The hunting pony is mounted, and ridden down to the pan; the

buck is picked up and slung behind the saddle, and the hunter strikes for his wagons, a mile away.

The pan is deserted now. Only the dark crimson stain of blood upon the silvery sand, the spoor of horse and man, and the cloud of vultures, already circling in the blue void of sky, tell of this tragedy of sunrise.

CHAPTER XV

A BLUE WILDEBEEST HUNT

A July morning—Desert scenery—The sight of game—Preparations for the hunt—"Saddle up"—The troop in motion—A hard gallop—A nasty fall—Rifle tactics—A charge in line—An old bull hit—The finishing stroke—The death.

On a July morning in the South African veldt two hunters stand, just after sunrise, upon the *voor-kist* (fore-box) of one of their wagons, and, leaning upon the tilt, scan eagerly the great plains around them. It is a typical scene in the far interior. Behind them, four miles away, runs a sluggish river, the Botletli, its course indicated by some tall trees, among them slender palms, which somehow always manage to convey the impression of heat to an already sufficiently hot landscape. In every other direction, far as the eye can reach, stretches an interminable expanse of plain, yellow with long winter grass, treeless, and utterly devoid of shade. At this hour, the immense hollow of sky, which in this flat country looms unutterably vast, is of a

sweet pale blue, except in the east, where the rising sun has painted the heavens with flaming colours. At present the view is clear and uninterrupted, and the desert air cool and pleasant. In a little while the mirage will be flitting upon those spreading savannahs, the heat—winter-time though it is—will be fierce and oven-like, and the sky glaring and brassy.

One of the two men has descried, more than half-a-mile away, a dark line of game moving leisurely from the river across the plain. For a minute they debate upon the species, and then one of the hunters stoops down, creeps upon his wagon-bed, and unslings a long stalking-glass from its place. This is quickly adjusted, and now, resting the glass upon the tilt, the hunter carefully examines the trekking game. It is a spectacle that thrills the watcher with delight. Between thirty and forty blue wildebeest are stringing their way in single file across the flats. They are most of them full-grown bulls, and, through the powerful glass, their heavy buffalo-like fronts, cumbrous and lowering and shaggy with long hair, are plainly apparent. These great antelopes—brindled gnu they are called in Europe, in South Africa invariably blue wildebeest—have, according to their custom, crossed the wide plain during the night, have drunk their fill at the big river, and are now retiring at walking pace to their

grazing-grounds far across the flats, near the thick bush and forest to which they can retreat upon any hint of danger. The second hunter in turn takes a prolonged look, and then, closing the glass, both men descend from the wagon, and all is stir and bustle in the camp. Breakfast has already been despatched, the ponies have had their morning mealies, and two of them are now saddled and bridled. Meanwhile the hunters buckle on spurs, take down their rifles, fasten their cartridge-belts across their shoulders, and, swinging themselves eagerly into their saddles, ride out on to the plain. Behind them follow three Masarwa Bushmen, who have for the present cast in their lot with the Englishmen. These men—the keenest hunters and finest trackers in the world—conduct the spooring operations, cut up the game, and live for the time in a little heaven upon the veldt. To them meat is more precious than gold or rubies, and the advent of well-armed English hunters means days of pleasure long drawn out and much feasting.

The two mounted men first walk their ponies at a good rate at a slant across the plain, so as to cut off the game from the point for which they are making. They are pretty quickly observed, but not until they are within five hundred yards do the wildebeest take alarm. Then the heavy old bull, leading the troop, after a longish stare, tosses his head, whisks his long black swish tail, throws up his heels, cuts a fantastic

caper or two, and sets off at a lumbering gallop. Upon the instant the whole troop is alarmed and in motion, and now, following their leader, after various grotesque plunges, flourishes, and caperings peculiar to the gnu species, they swerve left-handed and sweep in a steady business-like fashion, amid a cloud of dust, across the dry plain. Now is the time for the hunting-ponies to show their mettle. They are both in good condition, and as the spurs go in and the knees close upon their ribs they spring forward eagerly, and at their stoutest gallop press after the flying game. But make no mistake; those apparently cumbersome wildebeest, now running a long way ahead, are far faster than their aspect would warrant. The long black hair and upstanding manes about their big heads create a false impression. Look closely at their clean, slender legs, and wiry, muscular, bluish-brown frames, and you will at once perceive that they are made for galloping. The blue wildebeest when roused can, indeed, run as fast as most antelopes, and his staying powers are of the highest order. The ponies, having now caught sight of the game, are doing their utmost. Dun and chestnut thunder along, cleaving the pale yellow grass that reaches to their bellies, and going, as an Irishman would say, "hell for leather." A long two miles of veldt have been covered and left behind, innumerable holes in the treacherous soil have been

evaded by the clever ponies, when suddenly the dun goes down as if struck by a bullet, and his rider is flung far over his head. It is a nasty fall, but such incidents are common; the chase is too exciting and the pace too good to stop and inquire, and his comrade presses on. Still the gallant game keep a good lead. Presently in the distance a line of bush appears. The hunter sees now that it is time to take action. He pulls up short, jumps off his pony, and fires two shots over the heads of the retreating antelopes. The bullets strike up the red sand not far beyond the troop, and the startled wildebeest, turned from their point, sweep round and head to the right. Another longish gallop, and the same tactics are repeated. Now the dark troop, bewildered out of their habitual caution, again wheel round, and this time charge almost in line right across the front of the horseman. It is a magnificent sight. As they pass within two hundred and fifty yards, the Englishman dismounts, takes steady aim, and fires. That loud "zwack," as a Boer would call it—plain as a bullet upon a barn-door—tells that one of the big bulls is hard hit. Again turned from their course, the troop bear right-handed and gallop on. Now they sink below a swelling of the plain, and are hidden for a few moments. As the horseman gallops up, he sees over the brow, two hundred yards away, the wildebeest, now at a stand, halted to

take stock of their pursuer. Nearest to him, lagging a little, is the wounded bull. Another bullet is put into him, and, at the report, away the troop scours again. But the big shaggy bull is now failing fast; he cannot maintain his place with his fellows, now hasting full tilt right across the plain. His pace grows slower, and he drops far behind. In a few minutes the hunter is within fifty yards. He leaps off once more, fires another shot, and, with the drive of the solid Martini-Henry bullet, the wildebeest sinks softly down, curls up exactly as does a sleepy dog, his limbs relax, and he is beyond his troubles. Although eight good miles have been galloped, and the camp meat is secured, it is now but 8.20 a.m., and the African day is still young.

CHAPTER XVI

THE HIDE HUNTER

A Transvaal Boer's camp—Skin-hunting—The old days—A true nomad—Daybreak—Hans Botha—Away for the veldt—Scenery—Spoor of the Zwart-wit-pens—The game found—A wonderful picture—Death of a Bull—The chase—Two more Sable Antelopes shot—A fine morning's work—How the game vanishes.

It is half-an-hour before dawn at the camp of Hans Botha, a Transvaal Boer, who is just now preparing for a morning's hunting. Not so many years ago Hans hunted elephants for their teeth, and did pretty well by the sale of his ivory down country. But that is a thing of the past; elephants south of the Zambesi are now so scarce that in a whole season's hunting you may not even see the spoor of one. And so Hans is reduced, like others of his kind, to pursue the game that remains to the veldt of South-Eastern Africa for the price he can get for the skins. It is a miserable profession, this skin-hunting, and only the poorest of the Transvaal Boers still stick to it. Thirty years ago, when the Transvaal

and Orange Free State plains still swarmed with game, the Dutch Afrikanders did pretty well at the business, and the wagons, loaded up with skins of the blesbok, wildebeest, zebra, hartebeest, and springbok, rolled merrily down to Port Elizabeth and Natal. Every farmer of those regions then shot for skins. But, having cleared his own country of the magnificent fauna with which it teemed, the average Boer has with a sigh relinquished the old hunting life, and only the poorer burghers trek beyond the Limpopo and follow the game. Hans Botha himself is a true nomad, thoroughly bitten with the life of the hunting veldt. His father was, in the good days, an elephant hunter before him, and he himself was born in the wilderness, and will probably end his days there. He may go transport-riding for six months and make a little money with his wagons and oxen; but a few days in the crowded streets of Johannesburg are quite enough to send him once more to the veldt, with its freedom, and its solitude, where laws and commandoes run not, and the voice of the tax-gatherer is not heard.

Day is just breaking! a few pink streaks fleck the pallid eastern sky; the francolins are calling to one another amid the grass, just as their cousins, the partridges, call at home, but with sharper and shriller voices. Hans Botha stands over the fire drinking his morning coffee and munching a "cookie" of Boer

meal. His stout vrouw sits near him upon a low wagon-chair, stirring the embers and watching the kettle of coffee. From the fore-clap (curtain) of the buck-wagon the faces—none too clean—of two or three small children peer forth. The Boer is a man of strong, loose-knit frame. His hair, eyes, and complexion are very swarthy—attributes which have descended to him from some Huguenot ancestor. His long, unkempt hair falls about his ears and neck. His vast beard has lost some of its true colour from incessant exposure to the sun, and is tanned to a kind of rusty black. His short cord jacket, and trousers of the same material, are frayed and torn from contact with bush and thorns, and the stains of grease and blood, from much skinning of pelts, are very apparent. Hans finishes his coffee, picks up his Westley-Richards rifle—an excellent weapon—buckles a bandolier of cartridges round his waist, a single rusty spur on his left heel, and climbs to the saddle of the small, rough, but hardy-looking horse that his native servant has been holding for him. Now that he is in the saddle you may see that, like most of his fellows, he wears no socks or stockings; his ankles are bare; a pair of highlow *velschoens*, fashioned by himself from a piece of water-buck hide, serve him for footgear.

With a gruff but kindly salutation to the children and his wife, the Boer rides off into the veldt,

jogging his horse's sides, and smoking vigorously from a big-bowled pipe. Close beside him walk two native "boys," who will assist in skinning and help to bring in the game. With the keen breeze of an African winter morning in his face, Hans moves steadily south-eastward in the direction of a river now dry, save for a few pools of water here and there. The tall grass through which he passes is bleached to a pale ochre by the constant sun. The veldt is fairly open; trees that in England we should call stunted grow thinly here and there, and patches of bush, mostly thorny, have to be ridden round. Presently, crossing a little rise, the course of the river, marked very plainly by tall palm-trees, may be seen two or three miles away upon the right front.

After an hour's steady marching, during which no other game has been sighted than a small buck or two, a jackal, and a family of wart-hogs, all of which the Dutchman suffers to go in peace, the hunter strikes the spoor he is in search of. The neat footprints, indented so plainly in the patch of smooth red sand there, are read like an open book.

A European would make little of that spoor; but Hans Botha sees at a glance that a troop of Zwart-wit-pens (sable antelope), big, long-horned beasts, has, after drinking at the river, passed that way but half-an-hour since. Already there is some improvement in the demeanour of the stolid Dutch-

man. His eyes grow bright, his thews stiffen, his frame is altogether more alert. One of the natives now takes up the spoor and leads the way. Botha shoves a cartridge into his rifle, touches his horse with the spur, to hint to him that game is afoot, and follows. Without a word the little procession moves on. The keen wind of daybreak is falling now, the sun grows visibly hotter, already the sweat begins to start from the three men.

After another half-hour the spoor leads them through thicker bush in the direction of a stony kopje, a litter of bare gigantic rocks, lying there as if thrown idly upon the veldt by some race of Titans. From amid the hollows start up bush, euphorbia, and aloes.

They are very close upon the game now. The Boer dismounts, hands his horse to the spoorer, and creeps forward over the lower edge of the kopje. From behind a patch of bush he sees at length what he is in search of. Out there upon the open grass plain, stretching before him under the sun in a blinding dazzle of pale yellow, is a troop of fourteen Zwart-wit-pens, perhaps the most magnificent of all the South African antelopes—great creatures, as big and heavy as mature red deer. Their glossy, black and rufous coats, and great, curved, scimitar-shaped horns flash to the sunshine. Some are feeding; some resting; there, on a piece of open sand, are two roll-

ing vigorously, their snow-white bellies gleaming in the act. It is a wonderful picture of feral life, and even Hans Botha, though he has shot in his time many scores of these great antelopes, and is intent only upon flesh and hides, pauses for a few moments. You can tell the old bull easily by his jet-black upper coat, heavy neck, and bigger horns; the young bulls and cows are much more rufous. One of the latter, by the way, is already suspicious, and has got her head up. Hans puts up his rifle, aims for the magnificent coal-black bull, standing there seventy yards away, broadside on, and pulls trigger. There is a loud thud, as on a target, as the heavy, solid bullet strikes home; the big bull falls to the shot, scrambles to his feet again, and lumbers heavily off. The rest of the troop are in wild commotion and tear across the big plain in a cloud of dust. Botha is quickly on his horse, shoves in the single spur, and gallops headlong in pursuit, loading as he goes. In 200 yards he sees with satisfaction that the big bull goes down again, this time for good. Now he swerves somewhat to the right, to cut off the rest of the antelopes, which are making for the line of bush forward. In ten minutes, after a rousing gallop, they are in the woodland again. Hans gets a chance at 150 yards, and although the game is cantering, long practice and the incessant habit of judging distances enable him to hit the rearmost animal,

a cow. She has a broken hind-leg, but it is yet ten minutes before the Boer can get near enough to her to give her another shot and then finish her with a third bullet. Leaving the dead cow in the grass, once more Botha gallops in pursuit. He has a stern chase, but the antelopes are tiring now. They have scattered somewhat, and the hunter at length, in a wide clearing of the open forest, comes suddenly upon three of the game, two cows and a young bull, standing again. In an instant he is off his horse, levels his rifle, and the bull falls. The Dutchman walks up. The poor buck's spine is injured; but though disabled, he can use his horns, and a sable antelope is a dangerous beast to approach at close quarters. Once more the rifle sounds, and at the report the stricken beast kicks thrice convulsively and stretches himself, dead. The Boer knee-halters his pony, takes off his coat, and, with the sweat streaming from him, sets to work to skin his prize. He has done a good morning's business, and is well satisfied. The three skins will bring him five-and-twenty shillings, and the heads, which a few years ago he used to throw away, he can certainly sell for a sovereign in Johannesburg to those idiotic Englishmen. The meat will, most of it, be salted, sun-dried, and turned into "bültong," another marketable commodity. And so perishes the game of South Africa!

CHAPTER XVII

THE VANISHING ELAND

Former abundance in Cape Colony—Last sanctuary in the Kalahari—Persecution by native hunters—Difficulties of protection—Disappearance of the fauna—The Eland easily destroyed—Its present haunts—Approaching extinction of the unstriped Eland—Former habitat—The striped Eland—Immense size of Elands—Large troops—Elands in captivity—A dainty beast of chase—Prospect of preservation.

Amongst the rapidly disappearing forms of South African game, the eland, noblest of all the antelopes of the world, is unhappily taking the lead. Within the memory of old men still alive, this great creature roamed freely over many parts of Cape Colony, and especially in the dry wastes of Bushmanland, which, even to this hour, afford sanctuary to considerable herds of springbok, as well as to the last representatives in the old colony of the gemsbok and hartebeest. Instead of finding the eland—as, with a little preservation, it might well have been—still flourishing in Cape Colony, one must now-a-days go far north to overtake it; and even northward one has to pene-

trate the parched and pathless recesses of the upper Kalahari before one may set eyes upon this stately quadruped, the Eland or elk—an absurd name—of the old-time Boers, the T'ganna of the Hottentots, Poofo of the Bechuanas, and Impoofo of the Zulus and Matabele. This northern portion of the Kalahari—well provided as it is with nutritious grasses and vast areas of shady forests of giraffe-acacia and mopani, and isolated by its utter lack of surface-water during eight months in the year from the assaults of native or European hunters—has, down to the present time, afforded safe sanctuary to many of the rarer South African fauna. Here have sheltered in these terrible days of extermination many of those remarkable mammals, which, during the cooler months of South African winter—say from April till November—are enabled to support life without tasting water. The giraffe, the eland, the hartebeest, the gemsbok, and even the koodoo, are to be found in these inaccessible haunts, far remote from any water-supply for great part of the year; the succulent melons and bulbs, and the grasses and leafage of the desert alone affording them moisture. But, even in these unexplored wilds, these rare creatures can, now-a-days, be scarcely considered safe. Directly the rains fall, hunters from among the Bakwèna, Bangwaketse, and Bamangwato tribes, well-mounted, and armed with breech-loading rifles,

penetrate to the innermost recesses of the Kalahari, and, wandering from one pool of rain-water to another, deal destruction among the game, and especially among giraffes and elands. That elands are still plentiful in these regions of the Kalahari I can personally testify, having found them in numbers, and procured specimens in two or three days' hunting from the desert road between Khama's and the Botletli river (between Inkouanē and Kannē) within recent years. Coming down country, too, I saw at Sechele's town—Molepolole—numbers of horns and heads of freshly slain elands, some of them magnificent examples, which had been recently shot by Bakwèna hunters. But that, even in the North Kalahari, these and other game can long resist the incessant war of extermination waged against them, I am much more than doubtful.

Protection is now given by various laws and proclamations made by the Government of Bechuanaland, and, quite recently, a table of heavy licences has been issued for the purpose of restraining indiscriminate slaughter by European hunters. In these edicts the Kalahari is included. But in these distant territories it is a difficult, almost an impossible, matter to enforce game-laws. Native hunters—a class more wasteful of animal life than even the Boers themselves—can still take the field; and even if the Bechuana tribes could be restrained from their wasteful methods

—they shoot elands merely for skins and meat, and all game when heavy with young, or with young at foot—the Namaqua Hottentots from the German side of the Kalahari, all of them skilled and daring hunters, and fair shots, can still ravage the Central and Western Kalahari, and are absolutely under no restraints.

It is a melancholy fact to acknowledge, but I fear even the Kalahari and its most difficult recesses can scarcely resist the utter extermination of great game for another twenty years; by that time, unless a very rigid protection sets in immediately—a thing well-nigh impossible—the eland will have been for some years quite shot out in other parts of Africa south of the Zambesi.

For untold centuries, the Bushmen and Bakalahari of the desert have roamed its flat, trackless forests and grassy wastes, wresting their food supplies from the teeming herds by poisoned arrows, pitfall, and assegai, with no perceptible diminution of the apparently inexhaustible store of animal life. Then, presto! appear the hunting-horse, the percussion gun, and the breech-loader, and in fifty short years the ancient fauna—tenants of the plains for ages of the past—the giraffe, eland, gemsbok, hartebeest, zebra, quagga, gnu, elephant, rhinoceros, lion —all the other units of that unexampled array of feral life—are clean effaced from the land. All this

has happened already in the lower part of Southern Africa, from which the great game may now be said practically to have vanished ; and now the beginning of the end is coming even to that local stronghold the Kalahari itself.

At the beginning of this century, the eland was still plentiful in many parts of Cape Colony. Barrow found it on the Karroo ; and in 1813, Campbell, the missionary explorer, mentions it as abounding between Graaff Reinet and the Orange River. Years before that time—in the early days of the Dutch occupation—elands ran in great troops over the whole country; and in Kolben's time (about 1700) were to be found close to the Cape Peninsula. To this day, the former abundance of this goodly beast is sufficiently attested by the frequency with which river, plain, mountain, and kopje are to be found bearing the name of "Eland," not only in Cape Colony, but in every corner of South Africa.

But the eland, from its great size and astonishing fatness, is the easiest of all the game to be destroyed. Except in the case of lean, light cows, a gallop of a mile or two on a decent horse is sufficient to run down the pick of the troop. The skin, and especially the flesh, which provides, perhaps, the finest venison in Africa, have always been much sought after by all hunters, and, in consequence, the eland has been exterminated from one district to another until Mashonaland and

the strip of Portuguese country eastward, the Kalahari, and the regions beyond Lake Ngami, are the only portions of South Africa where it may be now found. There is one exception to this statement. Thanks to the exertions of the Natal legislature, a few elands are—or were, till a year or so back—preserved in a rough and difficult part of the Drakensberg, dividing Natal from Basutoland. In Mashonaland and the Portuguese territory adjacent, settlers are now beginning to throng; the elands, a very short time since plentiful in that country, are, as usual, the first to be shot out; and a few years must inevitably see their disappearance in those regions also—that is, unless the British South Africa Company can succeed in making its game-laws respected, an immensely difficult matter in a vast, thinly-populated country. There will then only remain in Africa south of the Zambesi the less frequented countries to the westward—the North Kalahari, and the deserts thence to the Zambesi, in which the eland may be found. When we remember that in 1837 Cornwallis Harris described this magnificent antelope as inhabiting the plains of the interior—that is, the plains beyond the Orange River—"in vast herds," the survey is melancholy enough.

A curious point in the always singular freaks of the geographical distribution of animals is to be

found in connection with the eland. The eland of the Cape Colony, Orange Free State, Transvaal, Namaqualand, and Damaraland, in the old days, and the eland of the Kalahari at the present time, were, and are, always entirely devoid of markings, the body-colouring varying from pale dun or fawn in the younger beasts to a bluish buff in the old animals. In Mashonaland, the country between the Botletli and the Zambesi, in Portuguese South-East Africa, and beyond the Zambesi, in all parts of Africa where elands are to be found, they are met with bearing invariably a number of white stripings across the body—very similar to the markings of the koodoo —and are marked also with a black patch on the inner side of the fore-arm, and a dark list running down the spine. These characteristic stripings are entirely wanting in the eland of South-Western Africa, which, from the rapid narrowing of its habitat and its constant persecution, is, as I have pointed out, likely not long hence to vanish altogether.

That the absence of stripings has accompanied a more desert and waterless, more temperate and less tropical habitat, is a plain fact enough. And that the stripings appear in all elands throughout the more tropical parts of Africa is also perfectly apparent. To explain the variation is a much more difficult matter. Possibly, heat and moisture have something to do with it, This, however, is a diffi-

cult and a thorny subject, and even Darwin himself was oftentimes puzzled to account for the capricious nature of the markings and stripings of animals.

Schweinfurth found these striped elands in the country about the head-waters of the Nile, which would appear to be about their farthest range northward. In no part of Africa do elands appear to have grown to so vast a size, or to have been so abundant, as in the country between the Cape and Lake Ngami. Examples of the dun-coloured (unstriped) or desert variety have been killed measuring the enormous height of nineteen hands two inches (six feet six inches) at the shoulder. These were, of course, mature old bulls, carrying an immense amount of flesh and fat, and of prodigious bulk. Sir John Barrow and Sir W. Cornwallis Harris both mention instances of this measurement, which, however, in the good days was by no means uncommon. The enormous weight of two thousand pounds has been assigned to one of these champion old bulls. In these degenerate times, however, the hunter would have to go far before lighting on a specimen ranging much over fifteen hundred pounds. It is to be remembered that, forty or fifty years ago immense troops of elands ranged freely over the pick of the country, selecting the richest pastures, and grazing free and undisturbed. Now-a-days, like many other species, they have changed

their habitats, and seek only the most remote and inaccessible regions. There is a very fine example of an eland bull of the striped variety (shot by Mr. Selous) in the Natural History Museum, and another (also of Mr. Selous' shooting) at Cape Town. Neither of these specimens, however, reaches, I think, the measurements I have given.

In no part of the continent did such immense herds wander as upon the high and healthy uplands of Southern Africa, a country which seems to have been almost specially created for the support of countless numbers and varieties of great game. In those glorious days, the eland fed in troops of fifty, eighty, and even one hundred. Even at the present time, in the North Kalahari solitudes, large troops still wander. I have seen great quantities of spoor to the right of the road between Inkouanē and Kannē; and in the same region a good troop seen and hunted by myself and my comrade contained between thirty and thirty-five individuals. Such a troop of these magnificent antelopes is indeed a very noble sight.

The flesh of the eland is excellent—fat, well tasted, and resembling young beef, with a game-like flavour. The shape of the animal is of course well known. For many years specimens of the unstriped South African variety have been bred and exhibited in the Zoological Society's Gardens. These elands,

however, scarcely fairly represent the beast in its wild state, and grow to nothing like the size and bulk. The late Mr. Bartlett informed me also that the breed shows in captivity a tendency to deterioration, and occasionally requires fresh blood. Many of these beautiful antelopes have been imported and bred as ornaments to noblemen's parks. A former Lord Derby bred them for some years—the present stock at the Zoological Gardens represents, I believe, his herd. Lord Hill also had some; and there are still a few here and there in parks about the country. A butcher in Shrewsbury once had the carcase of an eland of Lord Hill's for sale, but found it an impossibility to induce people to buy and eat it. Good as was the meat, his customers, with typical British mistrust, would have nothing to say to such new-fangled stuff. The eland is so comely, so striking, and yet withal so gentle a beast, uniting some of the finest points of the antelope family with those of the zebu of India, and is so easily domesticated and bred in this country, that the wonder is herds are not more often seen in private grounds. A little fresh blood now and again would serve to keep up the required condition and growth.

Great as is its bulk, the eland, in its small game-like head, handsome horns, and slender, beautifully formed limbs, effectually saves itself from the unjust reproach of the hunter, who, having easily galloped

it down and slain it, calls it contemptuously a "mere cow." Not the most beautiful Alderney or Jersey that ever stepped can vie with the eland in its best points. The coat of this antelope is wonderfully clean, smooth, and short, so much so, that a child would stroke it with delight. As the animal becomes older, the hair thins and disappears, so that in the old bulls the skin shines through, and the general colour is a bluish-grey. Strip the skin off a fresh-killed eland, and the sweet smell of aromatic herbage upon which the animal has fed comes warm into your nostrils. No beast of the chase is so sweet, clean, and dainty as this fine antelope, a remarkable fact, if its immense size be taken into consideration.

Can nothing be done to stay the utter extermination of this and others of the great fauna of South Africa? Mr. Rhodes has his hands very full, or he could do much. Yet, if he and the High Commissioner of South Africa would put their heads together, some scheme of conserving wild game in a National or Colonial Park might without great difficulty be set on foot. Land is cheap enough, in all conscience. Already on the De Beers estate, near Kimberley, a number of the smaller wild animals have been gathered together—thanks to Mr. Rhodes—in a large enclosure. And at Mr. Rhodes's own estate of Groot Schuur, near Cape Town, a number of fine animals are preserved. On a greater scale,

and in a more suitable country, elands and other large antelopes, and even giraffes, zebras, and other game, might be preserved and perpetuated.

There are vast areas in the north-west of Cape Colony, where immense tracts of Crown land suitable for such a purpose still lie waste and unoccupied. The cost of land, of enclosing, and of providing rangers, would not be insurmountable, especially if Mr. Rhodes could be induced to take the matter in hand.

There are plenty of other districts in British Bechuanaland, the Protectorate, and even Mashonaland, where land is at present comparatively valueless, well suited for such a game park.

In the Cape Colony, much has been done by private owners upon a small scale to preserve the springbok, koodoo, mountain zebra, bontebok (now very scarce), and other game animals. Government has for many years saved to the Colony, by judicious preservation, the elephant and the buffalo. Surely something may yet be done for the disappearing fauna of the interior!

CHAPTER XVIII

THE HARTEBEEST IN SOUTH AFRICA

A characteristic South African Antelope—Vigilance, fleetness, and staying powers—Still plentiful north of Orange River—Bechuana cloaks—Boer names—Ancient and present habitat—Independent of water for long periods—Love of brack-pans—Hartebeests in British Bechuanaland—In Ngamiland—Description and peculiarities—Hartebeest hunting—Chased and killed by wild hunting-dogs—Flesh—Specimens in Zoological Gardens—Other forms of Hartebeest.

Of all the plain-frequenting antelopes that still adorn the veldt of Southern Africa, the hartebeest (*Alcelaphus caama*)—although not the most handsome—is certainly one of the most characteristic. It personifies some of the most remarkable points of the true antelope character. It is wary and vigilant to a degree, and, upon the open grassy plains, where it is so often to be found, it is extremely difficult to approach. It is possessed of immense fleetness and staying powers. In all Africa there is only one other mammal—the tsesseby, a nearly allied species—which can vie with it in these

respects, and in a tail-on-end chase the hartebeest can show its heels to the best and stoutest horse ever saddled in the hunting veldt—a feat that not all the larger African antelopes are capable of.

Chiefly owing to these protective characteristics, the hartebeest has, up to the present time, escaped much of the dreadful slaughter which has overtaken so many species of the South African fauna; so that, even to this hour, it is to be found in considerable plenty in the dry plateaux-lands beyond the Orange River.

Throughout the more desert portions of Bechuanaland, in the Kalahari, and about the great plains and salt-pans of the Ngamiland region, the hartebeest is still one of the commonest of game animals. In shape it is, what a racing man would contemptuously call a "three-cornered brute," and its curiously drooping quarters, high withers, elongated, old-fashioned-looking head, black face, singular horns, and brilliant bay colouring, render it easily distinguishable even upon a first encounter.

The Bechuanas and Bakalahari are exceedingly fond of a cloak made from the bright skin of this antelope; and in the remoter parts, where the white man's clothing has not yet penetrated, this handsome hartebeest cloak, with the bushy black tail pendent just at the back of the neck of the wearer, is quite the typical garment of the fashionable

native. I well remember as a boy, when reading the works of Moffatt, Gordon Cumming, and others, puzzling over the singular names of this and other African animals. The name "hartebeest" is, of course, easily explainable. It is of Cape Dutch origin, and literally signifies "the stag-ox." There are, of course, strong points of resemblance to the deer about the hartebeest, but it is difficult to understand where the likeness to cattle comes in. However, many of the old Boer names are equally puzzling; "wildebeest," "wild cattle," is not bad; but "gemsbok," literally "chamois-goat," is a quite impossible comparison; and "eland," "the elk," almost as bad. Yet, these quaint old Dutch names have become so rooted in the soil of South Africa, and recall such glories of mammalian abundance in those wonderful days of the past when great game swarmed throughout the land, that they rise to the tongue in a way perfectly natural. One accepts them unhesitatingly, yet with a feeling of regretful pleasure for the kindling associations they carry with them.

And the gallant hartebeest, with his old-fashioned air and old-world name, seen, as I have seen him, feeding quietly in small scattered troops upon some vast, yellow, grass-grown plain of the North Kalahari, or wandering amid the pleasant camel-thorn groves of South Bechuanaland, is about as typical

a representative of those good old times when the Cape Dutchman, clad in leather, wandered with his long "roer" (gun), the uncontrolled lord of a very paradise of game, as a man may now find between the Orange and the Zambesi.

In the old days, when the Dutch first settled at the Cape (1652), the hartebeest roamed all over South Africa to the very shores of the Indian Ocean and Atlantic. "Harts and elands" grazed upon the site of the present Cape Town. Now-a-days, unhappily, in common with many other noble animals, this antelope has been well-nigh exterminated from the Cape Colony. A few still linger in the desert region just south of the Orange River, between the Great Falls and the sea. These are specially protected, together with a few gemsboks still to be found in that region. Yet protection in a thinly-populated country is extremely difficult, and it is doubtful whether hartebeest or gemsbok will much longer be found, even in the solitary wastes of Bushmanland. In Natal, too, the hartebeest is protected, and survives in one or two localities, as, also, it does in Zululand. Crossing the Orange River the hartebeest is still to be found here and there in the remoter parts of Griqualand West. In South Bechuanaland, in the great unsettled grass plains and open acacia forests towards the Kalahari, and in the South Kalahari itself it is to be found

in some numbers. Towards Langeberg, beyond Kuruman, there are a good many troops here and there, though the Dutch farmers are thinning them out. And upon the dry, waterless course of the lower Molopo, and in the Kalahari beyond, they are to be found in considerable troops. All through the Kalahari and upon the desert western fringe of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, these antelopes are fairly plentiful. In Khama's desert country, and right through the dry wastes of the North Kalahari region; and about the vast flats and salt-pans of the Botletli river country, Ngamiland, large troops of hartebeest are often met with. I found them too in the waterless forests fringing the south bank of this river. These latter regions of the North Kalahari and Ngamiland may, indeed, be said to be now the true head-quarters of the hartebeest in Southern Africa. The South African range of this antelope extends a little north of the Botletli to the Mababi river. Upon the western borders of Namaqualand and Damaraland the hartebeest is still also to be found, as well as here and there in the remoter and less settled portions of the North-West Transvaal. Curiously enough, the eastward range of the true hartebeest seems to end suddenly at Matabeleland, in which country, as in Mashonaland, it is, according to Mr. Selous, unknown. Mr. Selous gives its easterly limit as the Serule river, on

the road from Bamangwato to Tati. It is certainly still to be found at this day not very far to the west of the Serule.

The hartebeest loves a flat grassy country, and is to be found indifferently upon treeless grassy plains, or in open park-like giraffe-acacia forests, in which (as in so much of Western Bechuanaland and the Kalahari) the long sweet grass is to be found. Like other desert-bred animals frequenting these regions, the hartebeest is capable of existing for long periods without drinking. During the dry winter months it is certain that this antelope, in many regions of the interior, can never touch water. I have found it during the season of African mid-winter in country where it is quite certain no water was attainable, and the Bechuana hunters with me and the Masarwa Bushmen inhabiting those desert regions, assured me positively that these hartebeests seldom or never drank during that season. These animals, in common with many others, are exceedingly fond of the salt-licks or pans so often found in South Africa. At Kudunque, between Mosita and Morokweng, British Bechuanaland, on the south-eastern side of the Kalahari, I found a good deal of hartebeest, gemsbok, and other spoor. Well-defined game-paths made by hartebeests led to this place from the direction of the Molopo to the north, and some Dutchmen shooting at night at the brack-pan had

recently killed a number of these antelopes. The hartebeests seemed to have passed the pool of water here and gone straight to the brack-pan. The soft limestone rock forming the pan had been completely hollowed out in places at the edge by the tongues of the myriads of game during untold centuries, and the surface of the pan itself was smooth and clean from the same reason. There are still considerable numbers of hartebeests about all this part of British Bechuanaland, and if the new game laws can be enforced (a difficult matter in a wild, almost unpoliced region), and the natives restrained from their indiscriminate slaughter, the species would soon become again abundant. We, and our neighbours, near the junction of the Maritsani and Setlagoli rivers, had two or three troops of hartebeest on our runs. These animals were seldom or never disturbed (we only hunted them on two occasions), and they were in the habit of roaming freely from farm to farm—here, as yet, quite unfenced. In consequence of their immunity they had become comparatively tame, and were often encountered. It was a great pleasure to see them. When I left our huts at the junction of the Maritsani and Setlagoli, in 1890, to proceed further north, some neighbours took my place. A little later in the year some of these hartebeests were in the habit of passing the huts within sight of the inhabitants

every day on their passage from one grazing ground to another, a striking proof of the confidence they had regained. Much of this part of South Bechuana-land consists of open forest of giraffe-acacia—much resembling an English deer-park—having spacious glades here and there, and with the ground covered everywhere with long hay-like grass.

This is the very country for hartebeests. They can enjoy shade and shelter during the cold winter nights, when the thermometer often runs down in May and June to ten degrees below the freezing point, while grass is plentiful.

They are seldom found in thick bush. In the North Kalahari country we found them on big open plains, where they could attentively scan all comers. It is hard to say in which scenery the gallant red hartebeests looked most attractive; they seemed equally appropriate to their surroundings, whether viewed in thin forest or in the open, grazing belly-deep in grass, their red bodies thrown into strong relief against the dazzling glare of the yellow plains. In the country twenty or thirty miles south of the Botletli river we found them again in giraffe-acacia forest, in veldt frequented by giraffe, gemsbok, and occasionally koodoo. Here there was no source of water supply, except in the above-named river, to which neither hartebeest, giraffe, gemsbok, nor koodoo ever resorted. Burchell's zebras and blue

wildebeest, on the contrary, crossed the plains and drank every night, or nearly every night. The springboks on the flats, although grazing nearer the river, visited the water little if at all. Upon the great salt-pans round about the so-called Lake Komadau—a vast mass of swamp and reed-beds, in which the Botletli river loses itself—and on the open plains surrounding, hartebeests are also found, as also about the N'twetwe salt-pans north of Lake Komadau.

The rooi (red) hartebeest, as the up-country Boers term him, to distinguish him from his cousin the tsesseby (*Alcelaphus lunatus*), which they term the bastard hartebeest, or Zulu hartebeest, stands in height rather more than 4 ft. at the withers, which are elevated and slightly humped. Occasional specimens will measure nearly 5 ft., but the average may be taken as about 4 ft. In extreme length the antelope measures rather more than 8 ft. The head and face are inordinately—nay, absurdly—long. The horns are stout, strongly corrugated, and of very peculiar shape. Placed high upon a lofty frontal bone, they rise for several inches, then curve slightly forward, afterwards turning at an abrupt angle sharply back. In the old bulls the horns are thick and massive, and often much worn and blunted at the points; those of the females are more slender.

Of all the larger antelopes the horns of the hartebeest are least fitted for defence. Even among themselves during the rutting season the bulls inflict little damage upon each other. They fling themselves upon their knees, depress their heads, and batter one another stoutly, but there is little harm done. I have seen them at play, out of the rutting season, engaged in this pastime, kneeling and butting, very much as lambs may be seen at home. It was a curious and very interesting performance, soon, however, to be disturbed. The eyes, which are placed extremely high in the head, are well calculated to command a wide field of vision. They lack the melting beauty of so many of the antelopes, and are of a reddish hue. The brain, too, is placed very high in the skull. Just below the eyes there is on either side of the face a curious whorl of thick hair. These prominent circular patches add to the other facial singularities of these antelopes. The face is black; a black list runs down the ridge of the neck; and the well-bushed tail, which reaches below the hocks, is also black, with a curious tint of red in the hair. There are dark streaks also on the fore and hind legs. A patch or blaze of yellowish-white marks the rump. The general colour of the antelope is, as I have said, a bright brownish-bay. The coat is short, smooth, and shining. The slope from the withers to the rump is more pronounced than in

any other species of African game, save the giraffe. The hindquarters are drooping, and somewhat mule-like. The legs are clean, fine, and shapely; the hocks are well let down, and indicative of speed and staying power.

In their slow paces these singular antelopes are heavy and lumpish. I have met settlers in British Bechuanaland who compared them to mules, and even donkeys. When disturbed, they canter off with this heavy, sluggish-looking action, with which, however, they manage to cover the ground at a strong pace. When really pushed they stretch themselves out, and, with a free, machine-like, untiring action, compass mile after mile without the least symptom of weariness. Their speed and staying power is extraordinary. I well remember running a strong troop on the Maritsani, in company with two or three other shooting friends. We were well mounted, and galloped the hartebeests for seven miles on end, at the highest speed our nags could accomplish. The hartebeests completely beat us, and one of our horses never got over the tremendous exertions of that chase. If it were not, indeed, for two or three rather foolish traits in the hartebeest character, it is difficult to say how hunters could secure their downfall, except by the most laborious and difficult of stalking—by no means an easy matter in an often completely waterless veldt.

In the first place, hartebeests are excessively curious. If not pressed too hard, the troop will often wheel round in the middle of a run and indulge in a good stare at their pursuers. Again, if the leader or leaders of the troop, usually an old bull or two, can be wounded and turned out, the rest seem to lose their heads, and, instead of running straight away, suffer themselves to be easily cut off and slain. As a rule, too, they head straight up wind in an undeviating line, and, with a little manœuvring, can be pretty easily cut off. I have thus ridden right into a troop, cutting it completely in half. The fore part of the troop got away, the remainder stood bewildered for a minute or two, so that I got a fair shot at a good bull at 150 yards. These animals are, however, extremely tenacious of life, and will run long distances even when mortally wounded. In spite of these weak points in its character, it may with truth be said that the hartebeest is one of the most difficult of all South African game to bring to bag.

But although, as I have shown, the hartebeest can easily distance the efforts of all human hunters, he has among the fauna of the veldt a pursuer so untiring, so relentless, so systematic, and so terrible that even he has to succumb to it. The wild Cape hunting-dog, the "wilde honde" of the Boers, the *Lycaon pictus* of naturalists, which still hunts in

bands in many parts of South Africa, runs down successfully, time after time, even the fleet and enduring hartebeest. These terrible wild hounds hunt in the most cunning and systematic fashion. They turn out a buck from the troop and drive their quarry in wide rings. Relays of the pack, which is often very numerous, take up the chase at different points, and in the end even the fleetest and strongest antelopes of the veldt are remorselessly pulled down, torn to pieces, and devoured. The hounds are themselves singularly stout runners, the leaders press up to the buck, take a snap or two at its flanks, belly, and hind-legs, and fall back. They are succeeded as they tire by others, and at last, usually after a prolonged chase, the buck, already terribly mauled and torn, becomes exhausted, and falls a victim. I once saw at break of dawn, west of the Botletli, a pack of these hounds hunting a koodoo. They halted as they passed my wagon, and indulged in a prolonged and very cheeky stare. They are singularly fearless creatures.

The flesh of the hartebeest is fairly palatable, darkish in colour, and makes good bültong (sun-dried flesh), though not so good as the bültong of springbok or koodoo.

The Zoological Society have exhibited for the last year or two a pair of South African hartebeests, both of them very good and representative specimens, so

that naturalists and admirers of antelopes may now enjoy a prolonged inspection of these very interesting beasts. It seems to me, however, that the colouring of these antelopes is in London much duller and less brilliant than in the sun-drenched veldt of South Africa. This peculiarity, which I have noticed in the giraffes and other animals in captivity, is one for which I suppose our dull and sunless climate is greatly answerable. A life of nature and of freedom, too, as opposed to a life of captivity, must be held somewhat accountable for this difference in colouring. There have not been many hartebeests exhibited at the Regent's Park Gardens. Until 1869 there had been but two shown, and there have been few since. And, thanks to the increasing difficulty of procuring all the larger and rarer antelopes, I fear not many more are destined to adorn the Gardens after the lives of the present pair.

A form of hartebeest (now known as Jackson's hartebeest) very closely resembling the South African species, although not found immediately north of the Zambesi, seems to be widely distributed in Central and East Africa. Schweinfurth found this animal, which he and others long mistook for the true hartebeest, in considerable numbers in the heart of the continent just north of the equator. In South-Eastern Africa and just beyond the Zambesi,

Lichtenstein's hartebeest (*Alcelaphus lichtensteinii*), a somewhat nearly allied form, differing, however, a good deal in the shape of the horns, is found taking the place of the true South African hartebeest.[1] In Eastern Africa again, in addition to Jackson's and Lichtenstein's hartebeest, another interesting species, Coke's hartebeest, has in recent times been discovered. This new species bears a strong family likeness to the true hartebeest, which is not found in East Africa. In the north of Somaliland and Shoa, again, yet another species, Swayne's hartebeest, has been identified by Capt. Swayne; another, the "Tora," or "Tetel" of the Arabs, is found in Abyssinia and Upper Nubia. Again, on the West Coast—Gambia, Niger, and Cameroons—a form of hartebeest is found, intermediate between the Bubaline antelope of North Africa and Lichtenstein's hartebeest. In North Africa the Bubaline antelope, *Alcelaphus bubalis*), a family connection of uglier form and more washy colouring, is found. The range of this last antelope extends as far as Arabia and even Syria, and affords the only instance of a member of this group of antelopes being found in Asia.

It would seem probable that the Bubaline antelope may be an interesting link between the far-off ages when many forms of animal life, now peculiar to the

[1] The Transvaal hunting Boers call this antelope the "Moff hartebeest."

African continent, wandered freely in Asia, and even Europe.

The Bechuanas of all septs and tribes call the hartebeest universally "khama." The great chief Khama, of Bamangwato, himself takes his name—quite an old family one—from this antelope. The Masarwa Bushmen of the Kalahari also call it khama, with a strong click on the kh'. The old Hottentot name was "karap"—also with a strong preliminary click. In Central Africa, according to Schweinfurth, the animal is known among the Bongo people as "karia," among the Niam-Niam as "songoro."

In East Africa the vernacular name for Jackson's hartebeest is "Ngazi."

Although, as I have pointed out, the hartebeest has, after more than 200 years of persecution, been all but extirpated from the Cape Colony, it yet manages in the interior to maintain its ground fairly well. That this fleet and interesting antelope, one of the finest beasts of chase now left to South Africa, may long survive to add charm and interest to woodland and to plain must be the hearty wish of every lover of nature.

CHAPTER XIX

THE PRINCE OF ANTELOPES

Magnificence of the Koodoo—Still fairly abundant—Distribution in the interior—Still found in Cape Colony—In South Bechuanaland and other places—Live specimens seldom seen in England—Specimens in Natural History Museum—Description of the Koodoo Bull—Its characteristics—Cows and Calves—Favourite ground—Uses of hide—Flesh—General distribution in Africa—Native names—Its independence of water—Koodoos in Khama's country.

Among the familiar figures of the South African interior the koodoo holds and has always held a deservedly prominent place. Indeed, although those magnificent beasts the eland, the roan and sable antelopes, and the gemsbok may be said to stand unchallenged among members of their race in any part of the world, the majestic and stately koodoo in shape, beauty, size of horns, and general nobility of bearing is, even in Africa, without a superior among the antelopes. I speak, of course, of the male koodoo, the female being hornless. Thanks mainly to its shy and secluded habit, and its constant love of bushy and forest fastnesses, the koodoo, notwithstanding the incessant destruction of game during

the last fifty years, still remains fairly abundant in South Africa beyond the Tropic of Capricorn. It has not yet disappeared from the Bakwèna and Bakatla countries of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, or even from the western part of the Barolong country, in British Bechuanaland, and still lingers in the dense bush east and west of the Limpopo river. All over Khama's country it is to be found—even to within a short distance—a few hours' ride—of the capital, Palachwe. In Matabeleland and Mashonaland it is common—in Mashonaland, indeed, one of the commonest antelopes. In the forest and bush country fringing the southern bank of the Botletli river, Ngamiland, and thence northward to the Zambesi, in suitable localities, this antelope ranges freely, and seems likely to defy extermination for some time to come.

I first heard of the koodoo some years ago as far south as the densely jungled country about the Great Winterhoek mountains, not very far from Uitenhage in the Eastern Province of Cape Colony. Occasionally they wandered through the mountains as far as the Witteberg range bordering the south-eastern corner of the Great Karroo. Once or twice, even, solitary individuals were found on rocky ground on the Karroo itself, at Riet Fontein, the estate of the late Mr. J. B. Evans, the well-known goat and ostrich farmer. It is a pleasure to know that since those

days, the koodoo, thanks to the preservation of English farmers, has increased and multiplied in this locality, and is on a few farms fairly abundant. Shooting takes place for a week in each year; during the rest of the season the animals remain entirely unmolested. Here is an excellent example of what may be done elsewhere in South Africa by timely and intelligent preservation.

From the southern portion of Cape Colony—in the district I speak of—not a koodoo is now-a-days to be found until the Orange River is crossed and Griqualand West is reached. In one or two secluded portions of Griqualand West, I believe a few koodoos are still to be found. In 1890-91 I first heard of them definitely in the Kalahari regions of South Bechuanaland, in the wild, waterless, bush country just to the south of the Molopo river, upon its westerly course. All along this waterless portion of the Molopo, koodoos are still to be found. Further north, as I have said, on entering the Northern Protectorate these fine antelopes become more plentiful, until in the Bamangwato country, and thence east, west, and north, they are often found. In Manicaland they are abundant; but in Swaziland, Ama-Tongaland, and Zululand, where, not long since, they were once to be found in numbers, they are now scarce. In most of the Transvaal and Orange Free State they may be said to be well-nigh extinct, except, perhaps, in the remote

north-west and north-east of the former territory, where, in dense coverts, they are still able to maintain here and there a precarious existence.

The koodoo (*Strepsiceros kudu*), which is to be clearly distinguished by its far greater size and different colouring from the very elegant lesser koodoo of East and North-East Africa, has not often been seen alive in Great Britain. I find that the Zoological Society have exhibited specimens in their gardens upon only two or three occasions, and that a good many years ago. There are three or four stuffed specimens at the Natural History Museum, Kensington, amongst them Mr. Selous' latest and most notable example—one of the finest koodoos, indeed, ever shot in Southern Africa. This specimen, which was shot in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, not far from Macloutsi, is very beautifully set up, and it is scarcely probable that a more representative example will ever again reach Europe. The museum and Mr. Selous are greatly to be congratulated upon having secured this noble addition to the national collections.

The grand head of the koodoo, with its magnificent spiral horns, often over 3 ft. in length, is pretty well known among game trophies of sportsmen in this country. But as the animal itself is not so widely known, I may draw attention to its chief characteristics.

The koodoo bull stands 5 ft., or a little more, at the withers. Its general colour varies from rufous grey to a greyish-blue, and especially in the older animals this bluish colouring will be found predominating. Cornwallis Harris, in his *Portraits of the Game and Wild Animals of Southern Africa*, depicts a male koodoo of a bright sky-blue colour. The animal is well drawn, but the colouring is decidedly too brilliant. I never saw the skin of a koodoo or heard of an example of quite so vivid a colouring. Along the spine runs a white list, and from this thin white stripes extend transversely across the body towards the belly. Just under the eye on either side is a clear white band which meets on the front of the face; while upon the cheeks two or three circular white spots are to be found. The head is neat, gamelike, and altogether beautiful, and is surmounted by tall spreading spiral horns of great weight and size, which diminish in corkscrew-like formation to sharp points. The greatest recorded length of a koodoo's horns appears to be 4 ft. $\frac{1}{2}$ in. in a straight line; over the curve, 5 ft. 3 in. The greatest length of the horns of the lesser koodoo in a straight line is 2 ft. $2\frac{1}{4}$ in.; over the curve, 2 ft. $11\frac{1}{4}$ in.—a great falling off.[1] There are often great and striking differences in the spread of koodoo horns. Fine specimens will sometimes spread between the

[1] From *Records of Great Game*, by Rowland Ward.

tips as much as 4 ft. 1½ in. Other and equally fine horns will only spread a little over 2 ft. But whether widespread or closer in growth the effect of these magnificent spiral horns is equally grand. The eyes are large, and very beautiful. The ears are of a light brown colour, and are very large and spreading. The hearing of this antelope is marvellously acute, and the great yet delicate ears are manifestly exactly fitted for the arrestment of the lightest vibration of sound. The senses of smell and sight are also excessively fine, and, united to its preternaturally sharp hearing and general suspiciousness, render the koodoo usually a very difficult animal to approach or surprise. The neck of the male is strong, shapely, and well fitted to support the weight of the immense horns. The chin is white. From the throat to the dewlap extends a long and handsome fringe of white and blackish-brown hair, which adds not a little to the handsome appearance of the antelope. The neck also is slightly maned. The legs are strong, yet slender, clean, and beautifully formed, terminating in shapely feet, which give a dainty spoor, shaped like the ace of hearts. The koodoo's spoor is, indeed, one of the most perfect imprints of all African beasts of chase.

The weight of a good koodoo bull is about 500 lbs. In length this animal extends to some 9 ft. The withers, as in so many other examples of African

game, are high; the body is stoutly formed, and in general contour not unlike that of a Highland stag. The hair is, however, much closer and finer than the red deer's. The tail is about 2 ft. long, terminating in a point. The general port and demeanour of this antelope is exceedingly noble; and the magnificent carriage of the head, surmounted as it is by the great spiral horns, is one of the finest things in nature.

The female, lacking as she is in horns, cuts a much poorer figure than her lord; and her ears, unrelieved by the fine spiral horns, appear far more prominent and remarkable. The same may be said of the female water-buck, and of the females of the lechwe, reed-buck, pookoo, situtunga (all, curiously enough, water-bucks), as well as of the pallah. The calves are beautiful little creatures, of a bright rufous colour, strongly lined with white. The cows have only one calf at a time, usually between September and November—the favourite calving period with most South African antelopes.

The koodoo feeds more upon the young leafage and sprouting greenery of bushes, shrubs, and trees than upon grass. Its favourite browsing ground is bush and woodland, the stony slopes of hills, and well-bushed mountain sides. In these haunts this antelope is difficult of approach, and offers very excellent stalking. In countries not much shot over, however, the koodoo may be occasionally

surprised at quite close quarters. Mr. J. G. Millais, shooting recently in an obscure corner of Mashonaland, obtained one or two of his best heads at surprisingly close range.

In woodland and bushy country the pace of the koodoo, considering the weight and size of its horns, and the difficulties and obstacles of covert, is surprising. In hill country it is wonderfully active, and will jump magnificently; upon open ground, however, where it occasionally strays, it may be ridden down without much trouble, and upon the flat its gait is laboured and somewhat slow.

This antelope is gregarious, and runs usually in parties of from five to eight; occasionally, however, larger troops, numbering as many as twenty individuals, are encountered. In some thorn jungle south of the Botletli river, while hunting giraffes, I started a troop of fifteen upon one occasion. The hide of the koodoo is one of the most valuable of all South African antelopes; it commands a high price, and is much sought after. From it are manufactured velschoens (Boer shoes), leather thongs, whip-lashes, and even harness. The hide is thinnish, but excessively tough. I have seen a complete set of Cape-cart harness, made of koodoo hide, which was smart-looking, serviceable, and of everlasting wear.

The flesh is excellent and well tasted, and the

marrow-bones are esteemed a very great dainty by hunters and natives in the interior.

The koodoo is widely distributed. Its range extends beyond the Zambesi into Central Africa, and it is found as far north as Somaliland and even Abyssinia. It has a variety of native names even in South Africa. The Bechuanas call it tolo; the Matabele, e-balabala; the Makalakas, e-zilarwa; the Makobas, unzwa; the Masarwa Bushmen, dwar; the Mashunas, noro. In North-East Africa the Somali name is godir; while upon the Lower Zambesi it is goma.

The koodoo is by no means so water-loving as many antelopes. Indeed, it may be classed among that group of antelopes—comprising the eland, gemsbok, hartebeest, springbok, steinbok, and duyker—which are enabled to exist for long periods without drinking. In the waterless giraffe country south of the Botletli, I found, in the months of July and August—the dry season of African winter—several troops of koodoo at a distance of some thirty miles from the river banks. These koodoos certainly never drank at the river at that time; there was no other water accessible; and the natives assured me that the animals ranged this waterless forest region for long periods without drinking. I am confirmed in this opinion by Livingstone in his *Missionary Travels*. Speaking of desert animals, he says: "One may see

hundreds of elands, gemsbuck, the tolo or koodoo, also springbucks and ostriches, without being warranted thereby in inferring the presence of water within thirty or forty miles." I do not mean to assert that in many localities, where water is plentiful, koodoos do not drink; but I think it is undoubted that in desert regions, where water is scarce or lacking, they have the faculty of existing without it for considerable periods of time. This, too, is certainly the case with koodoos still ranging the waterless country along the western course of the Molopo river in Lower Bechuanaland.

I have said that koodoos are still plentiful in Khama's country, Bamangwato, even at a short distance from Palachwe. I have seen their spoor certainly within three hours' ride of that place. In 1890, while I was at Palachwe, the young chief Sekhome, heir apparent of Khama, was indulging in large drives of game—in which koodoos were often killed—at no great distance from the Bamangwato capital. I well remember hearing of his anger at the escape of a big koodoo bull and some cows from the ring of hunters, and of the punishment that followed. My hunting friends and myself first came across these fine antelopes at Seleba Samoutchana, a little beyond Seruey, two or three days north-west of Palachwe, in some big bushy flats between isolated hills—typical koodoo country. It is to be hoped

that before the koodoo becomes much scarcer, representative specimens may again be seen alive in the Zoological Society's Gardens. While remembering the terrible extermination of game from the vast open plains of South Africa, it is some comfort to reflect that the koodoo, securer in its bush and forest sanctuaries, will yet remain for some years in the interior. The true aristocrat of the wilderness, the prince of antelopes, long may the koodoo linger to adorn the bush veldt and the mountain side.

CHAPTER XX

THE WHITE-TAILED GNU

Fast disappearing—Present numbers and habitat—Curious characteristics—Sparrmann's and Barrow's description—A true Antelope—Wild aspect—A dangerous beast—Resemblance to horns of Musk Ox—Grotesque evolutions—Gordon Cumming's description—Inquisitive traits—Ravages of "brandt sickte"—Ancient habitat—Liking for Quagga and Ostriches—Specimens at the Zoological Gardens—Curious likeness to cattle—Poverty of specimens in Natural History Museum.

AMONG the fast-disappearing forms of wild animal life in South Africa this animal now occupies, unhappily, a leading place. It is, in fact, a good deal nearer extinction than most people are aware of. Quite recently there have been one or two shipments of this gnu to Europe. A collector in Holland has had some success in breeding from captive specimens, and within the last two or three years several examples have found their way into England. But upon its own karroos and plains in Cape Colony and the Orange Free State this interesting quadruped is now conspicuous by its almost complete

absence. In all Cape Colony, where, until forty years ago, the white-tailed gnu roamed the veldt in innumerable thousands, one small troop of twenty or thirty, preserved by a farmer in the division of Victoria West, remains to tell of the past. I should say "remained," for, although this troop was still existing not very long since, I heard a not altogether flourishing account of it, and it may by this time have disappeared. In the Orange Free State the same melancholy tale has to be told. Here and there on protected farms a few white-tailed gnus are still to be found. But they are not plentiful, and can only be preserved with the greatest care and diligence. Sad it is to remember that, less than forty years ago, in the Free State this gnu was to be reckoned by many hundreds of thousands; the great plains were literally black with them. It may with truth be said that now-a-days this gnu, and the bontebok and blesbok, are far less plentiful in South Africa than diamonds.

The white-tailed gnu, or, as it is more commonly known in South Africa, the black wildebeest (zwart wildebeest—literally "black wild-ox"—of the Dutch Boers), the gnu or gnoo of the Cape Hottentots, the *Connochætes gnu* of scientists, is one of the most fantastic and interesting forms that nature has to show. To look at the head alone—fierce, wild, heavy and menacing—you might well imagine that a

buffalo, or something very like it, was before you. The eye is very ox-like. Turn to the barrel, back, rump, and quarters, and the arched neck, and the idea of a brown pony suggests itself. Glance at the slender legs and neat shapely feet; and the truest points of the antelope family are there. Add to these characteristics a bristling, upstanding whitish mane, and long white swish tail, and the maddest and most fantastic behaviour ever exhibited by any animal, and you are still more bewildered. No wonder that the earlier travellers and naturalists were puzzled to know how to classify so unaccountable and so freakish a beast.

Sparrmann, that accurate and steady-going Swede, who travelled to the Cape in 1772, and was one of the first to give a hint to the world of the glorious fauna of the interior, rightly described this gnu as an antelope. Barrow, who followed Sparrmann in 1796, refers to it as described in the *Systema Naturæ* of Linnæus as "a variety of the bos caffer, or buffalo, under the diagnosis, elegans et parvus Africanus bos," and he himself considered it as "partaking of the horse, the ox, the stag, and the antelope," and adds, rightly enough, that it was possessed of "strength, swiftness, weapons of defence, a nice nose, and a quick sight."

The white-tailed gnu has now been long established among the true antelopes, puzzling as are some of its

characteristics. A well-grown bull stands some 4 ft. high at the withers; the general body-colour is deep brown; the body is shapely, strong, and muscular; the neck thick and arched, and surmounted by a full, whitish hog-mane. The legs are fine, slender, and beautifully clean. The head is heavy and fierce-looking. In the middle of the face a thick mass of long black hairs stands bristling outwards, and there is more of the same bristling hair beneath the eyes, and under the jaw and throat, as well as between the fore-legs and some way under the belly. These masses of hair tend to impart a wild and heavy appearance to the creature's head and front. The ears are short and pointed. The eyes are wild and fierce—not unlike those of an excited ox—and are surrounded by long bristling white hairs, which also adorn the upper nostril, adding still more to the singularity of this singular animal. The horns, strong and thick at the base, trend downwards sideways over the eyes, and then suddenly turn upwards in a sharp hook. They are no mean weapons of offence, as many a slain dog and wounded man has testified. Only a year or two since a Dutch farmer in the Orange Free State, at Lindley, had six black wildebeest upon his run—two of them bulls. One of these bulls grew troublesome, escaped from the "camp" (enclosure), and was shot. Shortly after a native entered the "camp" and fell asleep by an

ant-heap. The remaining bull wildebeest found him out, attacked him fiercely, and dragged him about with its sharp horns. The man was found dead subsequently, with a terrible wound near the heart, and his clothes torn from his body.

Neither this antelope, nor its cousin, the blue wildebeest (brindled gnu), are to be treated lightly at close quarters or when wounded.

It is a far cry from the gnu of hot South Africa to the musk-ox of the frozen north, but, so far as I can remember, the horns of the musk-ox—if somewhat smaller—resemble the horns of this gnu more closely than those of any other quadruped

The flesh of the white-tailed gnu is neither game-like nor attractive, except in the quite young calf. Many people have compared it to poor beef. The flesh of the blue wildebeest is, to my thinking, very similar, and in the hunting veldt any antelope, almost, is preferable as a source of food-supply.

Upon its own primeval karroos the behaviour of this gnu was always thought ludicrous and grotesque; every traveller writes with amazement and mirth of its extraordinary antics. "Wheeling and prancing in every direction," says Cornwallis Harris, "his shaggy and bearded head arched between his slender and muscular legs, and his long white tail streaming in the wind, this ever wary animal has at once a ferocious and ludicrous appearance."

Again, Gordon Cumming thus picturesquely writes of them: "Wheeling about in endless circles, and performing the most extraordinary variety of intricate evolutions, the shaggy herds of these eccentric and fierce-looking animals caper and gambol round the hunter on every side. While he is riding hard to obtain a family shot at a herd in front of him, other herds are charging down wind on his right and left, and, having described a number of circular movements, they take up positions upon the very ground across which he rode only a few minutes before. Singly, and in small troops, the old bulls may be seen standing motionless during a whole forenoon, watching with a philosophic eye the movements of the other game, eternally uttering a loud snorting noise, and also a short sharp cry which is peculiar to them. When the hunter approaches they begin prancing and capering, and pursue one another at their utmost speed. Suddenly they all pull up together, to overhaul the intruder, when two bulls will often commence fighting in the most violent manner, dropping on their knees at every shock; then, quickly wheeling about, they whirl their tails with a fantastic flourish, and scour across the plains enveloped in a cloud of dust."

The gnu is curious and excessively inquisitive, and in early days the herds often stopped in their gambols, and approached the passing wagon with

an air of ludicrous yet fierce defiance, stamping with their feet, snorting, and otherwise giving vent to their displeasure.

Pringle, who lived with the early Scotch settlers in the eastern province of the Cape, from 1821 to 1825, mentions (as do others also) that this antelope was strangely affected by the sight of scarlet. When approaching these animals the hunters used to hoist a red cloth on a pole. At this the gnu would "caper about, lashing their flanks with their long tails, and tearing up the ground with their hoofs as if violently excited, and ready to rush down upon us, and then, all at once, when we were about to fire, they would bound away, and again go prancing round us at a safer distance."

In the old days the young were often taken and soon tamed. They have been known to go to pasture regularly with cows and oxen, without any apparent inclination to seek again their natural freedom. Looking at the somewhat bovine character of the antelope, this is not a little remarkable. But the white-tailed gnu, in common with many other South African antelopes, was at times subject to a ravaging disease known to the Boers as the "brandt sickte" (burning sickness), from the aspect of the hide of the afflicted animals. In some seasons many thousands of wild animals perished of this disease, and as the Boers found that their own herds were occasionally

infected with the sickness, they gave up, from fear of contagion, the practice of domesticating the calves of the gnu. As in the case of the true quagga, the bontebok, and the blesbok, the habitat of the black wildebeest was singularly and quite unaccountably restricted. The old Cape Colony, west of the Kei river, the Orange Free State, and Griqualand West, may be cited as its true habitat. Occasionally, a few were found a day or so north of the Vaal river, on Transvaal soil, but not often. Harris speaks of meeting them again on his journey south, on the Chonapas—now the Mooi river, some twenty or thirty miles north of the Vaal. Their favourite, and indeed almost constant ranging ground, was, however, the flats of the Orange Free State and the vast karroos of Cape Colony. Here they roamed in immense numbers, until the Dutch settlers began to find their skins a marketable commodity. Thenceforward their downfall proceeded rapidly. They were slain day by day, month by month, year by year, in tens and hundreds of thousands, until the land which had supported them for long ages practically knows them no longer.

Whether the few reasoning and reasonable farmers in the Free State, who have taken of late years to preserving the poor remnant of black wildebeest left to them, will be able to arrest complete extermination, and restore the ancient breed is doubtful. I

am not inclined to be very sanguine of the result, glad as I should be to see this curious beast saved from the miserable fate of the quagga.

This gnu is restless, gregarious, seldom remaining long in one place, and accustomed to migrating in immense troops from pasture to pasture. As the brindled gnu has always been found consorting with the Burchell's zebra, so the white-tailed gnu was seldom seen far away from the quagga; troops of the two species mingled together, and the ostrich was found almost as often amongst them. I am not aware that the white-tailed gnu and the brindled gnu were ever found together; their habitats seem always to have been pretty sharply defined, and the two species seldom invaded one another's borders. The white-tailed gnu, although it has occasionally figured in the Zoological Society's collection, had not for some time been seen until 1893. Then to the great pleasure of all interested in the South African fauna—I may say of all naturalists—three excellent and representative specimens were deposited there. I paid several visits to these gnu, and watched them often, and with the greatest interest. No one who saw them could fail to remark the freakish and grotesque habits of these most singular creatures. Their sudden starts, capers, bounds, and antics, their whimsical frights and passions (for they appear to take alarm at nothing, to start at their own wild

fancies), were most amusing. One could not help but notice, too, the singularly bovine characteristics exhibited in the head. The Boers were really not so far out as usual when they christened the gnu in their own homely fashion "wildebeest"—wild cattle. True antelopes they no doubt are, yet they exhibit strong traces of a link between the bovine and the antelopean race. The brindled gnu (blue wildebeest) exhibits this strong bovine type about the head also. The broad flattened nostrils are singularly ox-like. I brought home, amongst other specimens, the head of a young three-quarter grown bull, shot on the Botletli river in 1890. The horns in this specimen have scarcely begun to make the big outward and inward curve seen in the mature animals, and the strong bovine look is very marked. An Englishman, who had never seen these animals in the wild state, was, not long since, hunting in Khama's country. The spoorers at length brought him rather suddenly within sight of a small troop of blue wildebeest. The Englishman at first took them to be merely some native cattle grazing, and the animals, taking alarm, galloped off, and easily escaped, much to the chagrin of the native hunters.

Now that some few specimens of the white-tailed gnu are to be obtained in Europe, it would surely be a good opportunity for the authorities of our various Natural History Museums to acquire a good

specimen, or even a pair, to set up in their galleries. Thanks to the energy and public spirit of Mr. Selous, the Cromwell Road Museum has recently acquired a fine pair, male and female, shot by the great hunter in the Orange Free State. Time and extermination run strongly in these days against the obtaining of rare species; and the director of the National Collection, Sir William Flower, may well be congratulated upon having thus been able to save the Natural History Museum from the reproach of having secured no representative specimen of the white-tailed gnu to hand down to posterity.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SABLE ANTELOPE

Captain Cornwallis Harris—The Transvaal sixty years since—The Zwart-wit-pens—Native names—Its characteristics and beauty—Discovery in 1837—Harris's first hunt—A glorious moment—Range of the Sable Antelope—Opening up of Mashonaland—Extirpation of game—Found north of the Zambesi—Specimens in Europe—The Zoological Gardens examples—Chances of survival.

In 1836 an officer of Bombay Engineers—Captain William Cornwallis Harris (afterwards knighted for services on a mission to Abyssinia), perhaps the most enthusiastic sportsman-naturalist that ever explored South Africa—journeyed from the Cape Colony through Southern Bechuanaland, and thence into the territory now called Transvaal, at that time absolutely a *terra incognita.* Here the very cream of big-game shooting awaited him, and it may well be doubted whether any hunter before his time (certainly no other since) ever wandered through so magnificent a game preserve as the virgin Transvaal country then was.

Harris passed through some of the fairest parts

of the interior during the season of the rains, when Nature was at her best and bravest. The veldt was verdurous, and starred with a million flowers; the forests were dressed in their newest and freshest attire; the legions of migratory birds were all attracted south by the rains; the rivers and streams were full and flowing; never was African scenery more beautiful. With Adam, amid the pristine glory of nature, he might well have said—

> " . . . . . . About me round I saw
> Hill, dale, and shady woods, and sunny plains,
> And liquid lapse of murmuring streams: by these
> Creatures that lived and moved, and walked or flew,
> Birds on the branches warbling; all things smiled."

A record of these notable wanderings appeared subsequently in that delightful book *Wild Sports of Southern Africa*. But Cornwallis Harris, besides being a hunter *primus in terris*, was a capable artist and a sound naturalist, and in his other and greater work, *Portraits of the Game and Wild Animals of Southern Africa*, he has handed down to posterity a complete catalogue of the fauna of that country, with coloured drawings and minutely accurate descriptions of almost every kind of game then known to exist between the Zambesi and the Indian Ocean. In a hundred years' time this noble work (even now scarce) will, when most of the animals depicted in it shall have become extinct, be a treasure indeed.

Upon this memorable expedition was discovered the sable antelope—an animal previously not only unknown, but undreamed of, with which the name of Cornwallis Harris will ever be associated. This is one of the rarest and most striking of the thirty odd species of antelope to be found in South Africa.

The sable antelope (*Aigocerus niger* or *Hippotragus niger*) is quaintly and descriptively called by the Boers "Zwart-wit-pens" (*i.e.* black with white belly), and by English hunters sometimes the Harris-buck or black buck; while the Southern Bechuanas know it as the *potoquane*, the Northern Bechuanas as the *kwalata inchu*, the Matabele as the *umtjiele*, and the Masarwa Bushmen as the *solupe*.[1] In height the male stands about 4 ft. 6 in.; in extreme length it measures a little less than 9 ft. The coat of the male differs from that of every other African antelope, and is of the deepest and most resplendent jet-black, varied here and there by an occasional touch of dark chestnut. A portion of the face, the belly, and the insides of the thighs are of the purest snow-white. The withers are elevated, as with many of the South African antelopes; the form is robust, and a bushy, black, up-standing mane runs from the

[1] It is extremely curious that tribes so widely sundered as the Makalaka of South Africa and the Swahilis of East Africa should have an almost identical name for this antelope. The Makalaka call it *Pala-pala*, the Swahilis *Pala-hala!*

chestnut ears to the middle of the back. The head, which tapers towards the muzzle, is surmounted by magnificent scimitar-shaped horns (measuring from thirty-five inches to forty-six inches over the curve in the male), which are deeply annulated for three-quarters of their length, and terminate in sharply-pointed tips. When wounded and brought to bay, this antelope—perhaps the most courageous and determined of its family—uses its horns with deadly effect; and Selous mentions having seen four dogs killed and four wounded by a sable wielding these terrible weapons.[1] Ever a lover of the bush veldt, or of the wildest and most remote mountain country, the Zwart-wit-pens, if pressed on to the flats, can, despite its robust frame, run with considerable fleetness and staying power. The female lacks the jetty mantle of her lord, yet is her colour—a rich dark chestnut—in its way almost equally effective. Alike in size and in length of horn, the female is smaller than the male. Viewed in its native fastnesses—perhaps grazing in some flowery kloof, where the glossy blackness of its hide is intensified by the blood-red aloes amid which it feeds, or perchance proudly standing higher up the mountain, showing boldly against the ruddy splashes of lichen

[1] Mr. J. G. Millais, in *A Breath from the Veldt*, has a great deal of interesting and recent information concerning this noble antelope.

that clothe the rocks around, or adorning some grassy clearing of the bush—no object in animate nature can well surpass this magnificent creature.

Cornwallis Harris first set eyes on the sable antelope in the Cashan Mountains, now better known as the Magaliesberg of the Transvaal; and the feelings of so keen and appreciative a hunter on sighting entirely unknown game may be readily understood. Rather would he have possessed one specimen, he tells us, than all the elephants in Africa. Instantly he started in pursuit of the herd, "nine chestnut-coloured does leading, and two magnificent coal-black bucks bringing up the rear." The first chase was, however, fruitless, and the hunter, cursing his fate, rode back to camp for a better weapon. Then, with his companion, taking up the spoor, they followed their quarry with an unquenchable ardour among the hills for the whole of that and the following day. On the third day at noon this extraordinary perseverance was rewarded; one of the jet-black bucks was wounded and brought to bay, and, "twice charging gallantly, he was at length overthrown and slain." The prize that thus fell to Captain Harris after three days of incessant anxiety and of burning toil, has ever since that time been one of the most coveted trophies of South African hunters. The Zwart-wit-pens was for years, however, never found very abundantly, and, until

recent times, had fallen to the rifles of comparatively few. Gordon Cumming, Baldwin, and others, indeed, pursued and slew it, but the extreme distance of its haunts from civilization, and the difficult and unexplored country in which it wandered, long prevented many sportsmen from procuring specimens. Mr. Selous has probably shot more of these antelopes than any other person. But Selous penetrated further afield even than Harris, and in Mashonaland he discovered at length the true home and abiding-place of the sable antelope. Here he found them in large troops of over fifty. Dutch hunters too have for years been shooting large numbers of Zwart-wit-pens in the country north-east of the Transvaal, especially about the Sabi river. There are still a few sable antelopes to be found in the eastern part of Khama's country bordering upon Matabeleland. I never found their spoor in the Lake river country (Ngamiland), nor do I think any are to be found in that region. But further north, in the broken, rocky country along the Zambesi, and especially towards the Victoria Falls, and about the Chobe river, they are to be found in moderate numbers.

Never very abundant in the Transvaal, even in Harris's time, at the present day there is not a single specimen, I suppose, anywhere to be found in any part of that territory. In the wild country

between the Zambesi and the Pungwe river they are, however, very plentiful. This country has only recently been opened up, and although hunters are now busily engaged in reducing its stores of animal life, the bush is thick, fever and dysentery are rife for some months in the year (November to May), and it will be some years before it is shot out.

In 1890, when the pioneers opened up Mashonaland, they traversed a good deal of almost virgin veldt. Even the Boer hunters from the Transvaal, those wholesale destroyers of animal life, had left this country severely alone, fearing to incur the wrath of Lobengula. In much of this territory the rifle had seldom or never been heard, and game of all descriptions were not only extremely abundant, but excessively fearless. Sable and roan antelopes, in particular, were found in extraordinary numbers. Lord Randolph Churchill in 1891 seems to have encountered quantities of these antelopes. So unused to mankind were they that a friend who was among the pioneers described to me how a troop of sable antelopes came trotting boldly up to him and his horse, mistaking them for some new and harmless kind of creature thus penetrating their solitudes. Another pioneer shot to my knowledge three sable antelopes in succession from behind a screen of bush before the troop became alarmed

and moved away. Mr. J. G. Millais shot some splendid specimens in South-East Mashonaland in 1894. But many hunters have since been at work in this region, and the sable antelopes and other game of these wonderful natural preserves are not likely to remain plentiful much longer. Already their numbers are fast diminishing, and, despite the enacting of game laws, it is too much to suppose that with the opening up of Mashonaland and the great influx of white men, game there can long exist in their ancient plenty. The story of the Transvaal will be repeated and the fauna will vanish as snow vanishes before the sunshine. Mashonaland and the neighbouring region seem to be the only countries where sable antelopes were to be found in large numbers.

They are, however, widely distributed in sparing numbers in Africa, north of the Zambesi. Selous speaks of them as being found in the Manica plateau north of the river. Livingstone also found them to the north on his first great journey along the Zambesi to the sea.[1] Schweinfurth encountered them in Central Africa in the neighbourhood of the Bongo country, and Mr. F. J. Jackson and Sir John Willoughby seem to have found them in small numbers in East Africa. Along the banks of the

[1] Mr. G. Penrice has recently shot them in Benguella, in Portuguese West Africa.

Wami river, in German East Africa, Mr. Jackson tells us they are fairly plentiful.

Thanks to the care and skill of Mr. Selous, some very fine stuffed specimens of this beautiful creature are to be found in the Natural History Museum at South Kensington. Male examples, purchased in 1861 and 1873, existed for a time in the Regent's Park Gardens. The late Lord Derby had in his Knowsley collection South African elands, which became the progenitors of the stock now thriving in the Regent's Park Gardens, but I fear, from what I have seen of the sable in captivity, these antelopes are too fierce and intractable to be successfully reared in confinement. For a long period there were no living specimens imported into England. Two years since, however, when the new giraffe was secured by the Zoological Society, a pair of half-grown sable antelopes were also purchased from the consignor. These young antelopes, notwithstanding the long voyage, were in splendid condition and coat, and throve excellently for some time. The female, although shy and nervous, is still doing well and flourishing; but the male, now approaching the adult period, has developed a most fierce and intractable temper. While inspecting this antelope, I moved to the front of its box to have a look at the handsome buck. The beast no sooner saw me than he advanced full tilt and drove his horns hard

against the wood-work separating us. The keeper informs me that this savage habit is increasing, and that he doubts whether the Society will be long able to retain the animal. I noticed that the antelope's horns were sadly worn and broken from butting and charging the wood-work of its stall. It is possible that if the scheme for the preservation of game on a large scale in the interior of South Africa be successfully carried through, the sable antelope may yet be preserved to us for some years. But, like the Scotchman, "I hae ma doots." Before many years are past, I fear, the Zwart-wit-pens, one of the stateliest and most glorious of the matchless forms with which South Africa was once literally overcrowded, will be well-nigh inaccessible, if not extinct.

CHAPTER XXII

THE BONTEBOK

Nearing extinction—A remarkable Antelope—Resemblance to Blesbok—Appearance—Dangerous when wounded—Present habitat, and numbers—Singular beauty of coat—Former abundance — The old Bontebok country — A troop in motion.

THE true quagga (*Equus quagga*) has already clean vanished from the great hunting-grounds of Southern Africa; the bontebok, a very singular and interesting antelope, seems destined to be one of the next to depart. The bontebok (*Alcelaphus pygargus*), or pied antelope of the Cape Dutch, in addition to the melancholy interest which attaches to it as a nearly extinct creature, is in itself a very remarkable antelope. It resembles very strongly its near relative, the curious blesbok—or blaze-faced antelope—but is slightly bigger, and more pronounced in its peculiarities. Ranging in height from 3 ft. 6 in. to 3 ft. 8 in. at the withers, the bontebok first attracts the eye by the singularity of its colouring, the downward slope of the hind-quarters, the pronounced hump, and somewhat

heavy, ungainly shape. The general body-colouring is of a dark purplish-brown, having a curious bluish-lilac bloom upon the back, almost as if the hair had been glazed. The face and forehead, the belly, legs, and a large patch upon the rump are snow-white; and, contrasting, as they do, very oddly with the dark brown coat, give to the animal that strange piebald appearance upon which the old-time Boers at once fastened for this antelope's earliest name, a name that has been associated with it for two hundred years. The horns are about 15 in. long, annulated, and somewhat lyrate in shape.

The bontebok is, undoubtedly, to be ranged with those of the more powerful and determined of the South African antelopes which are capable and ready to defend themselves vigorously when wounded or at bay. Thunberg, the famous Swedish botanist, who travelled at the Cape as far back as 1773, notices this feature. He says in his book of travels: "It is always dangerous to come near one of these creatures when shot, because, if he is not quite dead, he makes use of his horns, and may put the huntsman in danger of his life." And Mr. E. L. Layard, formerly the curator of the Cape Town Museum, writing of the Swellendam bonteboks in 1871, says: "If wounded and approached they will charge desperately, and I have heard of a Hottentot being killed by them thus."

The gemsbok, the sable and roan antelopes, the wildebeests, the bush-bucks, and even the water-buck, all defend themselves vigorously when wounded, and will even charge at times. The formidable horns of these antelopes (and in the case of the sable and roan antelopes their much greater stature) render them, of course, far more dangerous to approach when in extremity than the bontebok, which is less well provided with weapons of offence.

At the present time the bontebok, which could be counted sixty years ago by scores upon scores of thousands, has dwindled to one small herd, which has long been preserved on an estate known as Zoetendal's Vley, Swellendam, near Cape Agulhas, in the south of Cape Colony. There are no living specimens in Europe; if, therefore, the enterprising naturalist desires to see the antelope in the flesh he must travel far. The Hon. Walter Rothschild, an ardent collector, has quite recently procured from this troop the complete skin of an excellent specimen, which has been set up and now adds interest to his museum at Tring. The only specimen in the Natural History Museum was, until this year (1897), a very ancient one, dating back to 1830. Mr. F. C. Selous has quite recently been able to remove from the Museum, however, the reproach of only exhibiting an old and inferior specimen of this rare antelope. In 1895 he obtained permission, and shot two or three of the Swellendam bonteboks, a pair of which

now adorn the national collection at South Kensington.

These beautiful examples and Mr. Rothschild's Tring specimen are by far the finest now in Europe. But it is to be noted that, as in the case of the blesbok, its allied species, the wonderful colouring and most singular glaze-like bloom of the coat fades a good deal after death. Few antelopes' skins, indeed, retain in the stuffed condition the sheen and brilliancy that they exhibit in life. This remark applies with even more force to the skins of many notable birds of plumage.

In the days of its pride, the bontebok flourished in a wide habitat extending from the Vaal river even so far south in Cape Colony as Swellendam, close to the shores of the Indian Ocean. Le Vaillant, and other travellers of the last century, speak of its abundance, and Sir John Barrow, a most painstaking collector of zoological facts and a reliable authority, mentions that these antelopes had formerly been as plentiful in Swellendam as springboks upon the Karroo, a very sufficient evidence of their vast numbers. But even in Barrow's time (1797) the bontebok was becoming much scarcer in this southern habitat, a fact not very surprising when one considers its proximity to Cape Town. Upon the northern plains, just south of the Orange River, in the neighbourhood of the present town of Hanover, Barrow found this antelope in immense

numbers. The bontebok flourished here in great plenty for many years later, despite the advancing tide of Dutch hunters. Even so lately as 1851, a friend of the writer remembered some seventeen or eighteen still remaining on the Bontebok Flats, north of Queenstown, the last remnant of those illimitable herds that once pied the great Karroo plains south of the Orange River.

When the emigrant Dutch farmers quitted Cape Colony and crossed the Orange River, they found, in the country now called the Orange Free State, the bontebok pasturing upon the plains in still greater plenty. In company with blesboks, springboks, white-tailed gnu, quagga, and ostriches, they literally darkened the face of the land. Their numbers seemed as inexhaustible as the sands of the seashore; yet between 1840 and 1870 the skin-hunting Boers wrought their downfall. It is believed that not a single bontebok is now to be found in the Orange Free State, or indeed anywhere north of the Orange River. The little band spoken of as still existing near Cape Agulhas, has, thanks to the care of the families of Van Breda and Van der Byl, been preserved there religiously since 1830. But in-and-in breeding from one stock is seldom successful in the long run, and it may be doubted whether the last remnant of this once so prolific species can long survive the close of this century. All praise to the Dutch gentlemen who in a land of extermination

have so long warded off the extinction of this interesting antelope.

As with so many other of the South African fauna, the habitat of the bontebok was to the north singularly and capriciously restricted. Its range never seems, indeed, to have extended beyond the Vaal river. Cornwallis Harris, on his journey south from the interior, speaks of arriving suddenly in the country frequented by this antelope. "The number of wild animals congregrated," he says, "almost realized fable, the road made by their incessant tramp resembling so many well-travelled highways. At every step incredible herds of bontebok, blesbok, and springbok, with troops of gnus and squadrons of the common or stripeless quagga, were performing their complicated evolutions." This was in 1837. Alas, how changed are now the bare plains of the Orange Free State! An old hunter once described to the present writer the singular appearance of a troop of bontebok in motion. Like the blesbok, they always ran up-wind with their heads carried very low down. Their dense battalions presented the appearance of a vast mass of heaving purplish-brown, flecked here and there with white. The Zoological Society seems only once to have exhibited specimens of these antelopes—a pair of females, acquired as far back as 1871. The bontebok will probably never again be seen alive in Europe.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE DECADENCE OF GREAT GAME

Approaching extinction of game—Fifty years since—Present decadence—The chase an irresistible instinct—Famous hunters—Amenemhat I and Thothmes III—Roman waste of animal life—Native hunters—Introduction of firearms—The Cape in 1652—Crowds of game—The Boers as hunters—Great game in 1796—Hunters and travellers—Burchell—Sir A. Smith—Cornwallis Harris—Other English hunters—The emigrant Boers—Their destruction of game—Great waste of animal life—Gordon Cumming—Immense migrations of Springbok—Baldwin and Selous—Character of the great hunters—Game of Cape Colony in recent years—Game in the interior in 1890-91—A vanishing fauna—Mashonaland—Ineffectuality of game laws—Proposed park for preservation of game.

It seems probable that our descendants and successors will succeed to a world in which well-nigh all that is wild, natural, and beautiful has been crushed and improved out of existence, and from which almost every beautiful bird, every rare specimen of feral life has been eliminated.

Fifty years ago, if any traveller or sportsman passing through the prairies of North America, then crowded with unnumbered millions of bison, or trek-

king over the plains of Southern Africa, at that time literally darkened by countless herds of many kinds of game, had been told that by the year 1890 nearly all these magnificent creatures would have clean vanished from the scene, he would have laughed the idea to scorn.

Yet the impossible has happened, and the close of the present century sees North America almost destroyed as a game country; the bison has gone, the wapiti, the moose, the cariboo, and the bear are going fast. Of South Africa, a country more prodigally endowed by nature than any other part of the world, the same miserable tale has to be told. The elephant, the rhinoceros, the hippopotamus, the lion, giraffe, buffalo, zebra, gnu, koodoo, hartebeest, gemsbok, sable and roan antelopes, the blesbok, and a host of other examples—forming a galaxy of the noblest game the world has ever seen—have been swept away from great portions of the immense countries south of the Zambesi. Only in parts of the virgin veldt of Rhodesia, the adjacent territory in South-East Africa, and the most inaccessible deserts of North Bechuanaland and the Kalahari, are there to be found representatives of that astounding fauna which not long since gave unspeakable charm to plain and mountain, karroo and kloof, from the southern shores of the Cape Colony right away to the far Zambesi. And even in those distant and

difficult wilds their numbers are daily and hourly diminishing, so that apparently in a few more years the great game of all Southern Africa will be but a memory.

In India the same war of extermination has been, and is incessantly, waged, and with the same results. The Indian lion, the great mailed rhinoceros, the gaur, buffalo, sambur, bear, even the tiger itself, and many other species of great game are vanishing rapidly. In other countries the same process is going busily forward, at the hands of white and native hunters, with apparently the same inevitable ending—extermination, complete and utter.

It cannot, of course, be contended that dangerous carnivora, such as the lion, tiger, leopard, wolf, and other beasts, are to be preserved in countries where man is seeking the means of existence. But surely some strong effort should be made, before it is too late, to stay the complete extinction of useful, rare, beautiful, and defenceless game—such, for instance, as the African elephant, the giraffe, rhinoceros, and many of the finer of the deer and antelope, and wild bovine races.

The pursuit of game has, of course, many strong things to be said in its favour. It is a natural and apparently quite irrepressible instinct of man—an attribute which, no doubt, originally formed a part of that strongest of all human instincts, self-preserva-

tion. In the earliest times man was, of necessity, a hunter, to provide for himself and his family a food supply, and to defend them against what must, in those dim ages, have been an almost overpowering animal creation. By slow degrees man seems to have prevailed, and as slowly his weapons became more and more deadly. In those gross beginnings of time it may, in truth, be said that the chase was purely and simply an effort of self-defence. In process of the ages hunting became elevated to a very high place. Next to great warriors great hunters have been—even to these degenerate days—celebrated. And, still more commonly, the famous warrior has been a brave and active hunter. The stone records of the Assyrians teem with exploits of the chase. Even the less active and less warlike Egyptians testify upon their monuments to the deeds of their kings, and their interest in wild animal life. Amenemhat I makes record of his hunting prowess. "I hunted the lion," he says, "and I brought back the crocodile a prisoner." Thothmes III was a great hunter and collector. Fifteen hundred years before the Christian era he hunted elephants in the jungles of Mesopotamia, and came near losing his life on one occasion. From the sacred land of Punt —probably the present Somaliland—and other dim recesses of Africa there streamed to Thothmes a constant succession of strange animals. Giraffes,

leopards, cheetahs, elephants, oryxes, cynocephalous apes, long-tailed monkeys, and many other beasts, are all represented upon the monuments of his time. It is a far cry from the days of Thothmes, yet the love of the chase still remains deeply implanted in the breast of mankind. This *cacoethes venandi* has urged many and many an Englishman to the uttermost parts of the earth, and has aided not a little in the opening up of new countries.

The Romans of later imperial times were, of course, immense destroyers of feral life. The numbers of rare animals exhibited and slaughtered in the arena, and brought to grace various triumphs must have been prodigious. Yet the waste of the Romans, and the butchers' bills of the barbaric kings of ancient times were, after all, but small episodes in the decline of the mammalian fauna.

If the great game countries could have slumbered on in barbarism there is no saying how long the rarer fauna of the world might not have lasted. Before the advent of the white man and the introduction of firearms, the North American Indians, with all their necessary hunting, had made little impression upon the teeming herds of bison and the other game of their country.

In Africa, forty or fifty years ago, the country north of the Orange River was black with game. The various tribes of Bechuanas, the Matabele, the

Basutos, Hottentots, Korannas, and Bushmen, do what they would, could with their bows and arrows and assegais make no impression on those dense battalions. Even their *hopos*, or gigantic pitfalls, into which the game were occasionally driven *en masse*, served as no sort of check upon the exuberant plenty among all the wondrous beasts of chase.

Not until the European began to move abroad, and firearms came into use, was there any sensible decline among the mammalia of America, Africa, or even India. In the days of matchlocks, and even of flint-guns and smooth-bores, the destruction proceeded, of course, much more slowly than at present. But with the introduction of percussion-caps a great change came quickly in the annual bill of slaughter. Improvements in rifling and precision rapidly followed, and finally came the modern breech-loader to complete the work of destruction. It is now—unless some effectual method of preservation can be quickly introduced—absolutely certain that the complete extermination of the great game of Africa, America, and Asia is merely a question of years. And in Southern Africa especially, this period of extinction is very close at hand. The quagga (*Equus quagga*) has vanished; the white rhinoceros has all but been shot out; the giraffe, the elephant, the black rhinoceros, the hippopotamus, Burchell's zebra, and most of the great antelopes, are fast disappearing.

It is a melancholy tale, this of the extermination of South African game, which for the last twenty-one years, since I first knew the country, I have followed with the closest interest. In the course of my inquiries I have had occasion to compare the accounts of the fauna of South Africa, when the Dutch first landed there in the seventeenth century, with the fauna of the present day. Perhaps a sketch of the various periods of decadence may be not unprofitable.

When the early Dutch settlers landed at the Cape in 1652, with their first governor, stout Jan Van Riebeek, they found the country one vast and apparently inexhaustible natural preserve of great game. Down to the very shores of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean there wandered a countless multitude of the noblest and rarest species with which a prodigal nature ever blessed the earth. The elephant, rhinoceros, and buffalo roamed everywhere; the hippopotamus bathed his unwieldy form in every stream and river; the lion, leopard, and cheetah pursued their prey unchecked; the eland, koodoo, gnu, hartebeest, and a cloud of other fine antelopes grazed in astonishing plenty. The mountain zebras paced the sierras of the Cape peninsula and every other range of the colony in strong troops; the handsome quagga everywhere thronged the karroo plains. In every corner of that vast land, upon flat and upland, in deep and lonely kloof, and over boundless plain, there

wandered, free and undisturbed as they had wandered through countless ages of the past, an unexampled array of wild animals.

The early Dutch settlers scarcely knew what to do with this profusion of game. The elands and koodoos broke into their gardens and vineyards, the elephants and rhinoceroses made hay with their crops; the lions besieged them in their fort, and even dogged Governor Van Riebeek in his garden. There is a pathetic yet ludicrous entry in the old records of the Cape commanders, bearing date January 23, 1653. "This night," says the chronicle, "it appeared as if the lions would take the fort by storm."

Long after that time lions were plentiful on the site of the present Cape Town. In 1694 a number of cows were killed by them close to the fort.

As the Dutch slowly pushed their way into the interior they found the vast plains crowded with countless herds of game. Springboks, blesboks, and bonteboks pied the spreading veldt in hundreds of thousands. The grotesque white-tailed gnus charged and capered about the karroos, in company with their constant allies, the quaggas and ostriches, in immense troops. The stately eland—an antelope surpassing the ox in bulk and stature—the noble gemsbok, the original, as many men think, of the fabled unicorn, the old-fashioned, yet marvellously fleet, hartebeest, ran in unexampled plenty. You

may know to this hour as you journey through Cape Colony how and where the great game roved. Day after day as you travel you pass places bearing the names of the gallant game pursued and slain in such plenty by the old-time Boers. Elandsberg, Rhenoster (rhinoceros) Kop, Oliphant's (elephant's) River, Quagga Fontein, Gemsbok Laagte, Leeuw (lion) Spruit; these and a host of similar designations bestowed by the Dutch in every nook and corner of the land, demonstrate the wonderful abundance of the game in those glorious days. The very names are enough to rouse the imagination and stir the blood of the passing Englishman.

The Boers, very gradually and very slowly, drove the game before them. The early settlers were quite certainly not all natural-born hunters; yet they had stout hearts and strong arms, and with their primitive firearms they managed somehow, with infinite trouble and difficulty, to push back the game. Some of them, the farmers, and the bolder and wilder spirits, developed into elephant hunters, and brought many a tusk of ivory into the Cape market. These people clad themselves mainly with the skins of antelopes, dressed to a suitable texture. They must have been hardy souls; what with lions, elephants, rhinoceroses, buffaloes, and other dangerous game, and the occasional attacks of Bushmen with poisoned arrows, these early frontiersmen must have

had a keen struggle for existence. Unthinking men run down the Boer of South Africa. Not every European race, I take it, could have conquered the natural difficulties of a country as did these people, and have emerged so little spoiled by two hundred and fifty years of such an existence.

It is a sad reflection that the descendants of these pioneers became at a later period mere mercenary skin hunters, slaying the game for the paltry value of the hides, and quickly denuding vast territories of almost every head of the larger mammalia.

In 1796, when the British first took possession of the Cape, the Colonial limits of the Dutch were still very restricted. Mr. Barrow, whom I have previously quoted, undertook, by the direction of the Governor, a complete tour of the country, and in an admirable book of travels gives a very complete picture of those days. Elephants, lions, buffaloes, rhinoceroses, and hippopotami, were still plentiful in the eastern and northern portions of the Colony; the antelopes thronged the plains, apparently as thickly as ever, and the zebra and quagga were abundant. A fine beast, very nearly akin to the great roan antelope, called by the Boers the blaauwbok, and by naturalists the *Leucophæus*—which seems to have had in the Cape Colony a very restricted habitat, and was only found in the division of Swellendam—had, it is true, just disappeared; and

the pied bontebok, although still swarming upon the northern plains, had been greatly thinned in the same district (Swellendam); but, with the exception of these two instances, the game was as plentiful as ever at no great distance from Cape Town.

In 1812 Dr. Burchell, the naturalist, made his well-known expedition beyond the limits of Cape Colony, crossing the Orange River and entering Bechuanaland. This period marks an epoch in the history of the South African fauna. Burchell discovered several new and remarkable species beyond the Orange River. The white rhinoceros and Burchell's zebra still bear his name; and through Burchell and his excellent book of travels, some idea of the wonderful richness of the interior began to filter into the minds of Englishmen. Giraffes, brindled gnu, and other animals not ranging south of the Orange River were shown to be extraordinarily abundant.

In 1835 a great expedition under Dr., afterwards Sir, Andrew Smith, was sent out by the British Government for the purposes of zoological discovery. Smith did his work well, and added greatly to our knowledge of the fauna and avi-fauna of the interior. Some idea of the wealth of animal life in South Bechuanaland at that time, may be gathered from his descriptions. In one day alone he counted (and he was a man thoroughly to be relied upon) not far

from his wagons, between one hundred and one hundred and fifty rhinoceroses. On another day one hundred giraffes were seen almost at the same time. Other game was found in a like abundance; the water-buck, the pallah, the tsesseby, and other animals, first became known about this time. Many specimens still to be seen in the Natural History Museum bear testimony to the care and labours of this zoologist. Closely following upon Smith's expedition came that of Captain Cornwallis Harris, a sportsman often mentioned in these pages. Harris was a good naturalist and a most enthusiastic sportsman. To these qualities he added the gifts of drawing fairly in water-colour, and of writing very graphic descriptions of sport and travel. He and his shooting friend performed prodigies of slaughter among elephants, rhinoceroses (white and black), hippopotami, lions, Burchell's zebras, quaggas, and some twenty-six species of antelopes, including elands, gemsbok, koodoo, roan antelope, sable antelope (now for the first time discovered and named), water-buck, and others. Harris found elephants in the present Transvaal country (where not a single elephant now remains) in immense numbers. Rhinoceroses were as common as pigs in a farmyard, and were a perfect nuisance to the gunner. Here is a single instance: "On our way from the wagons to a hill not half-a-mile distant, we counted," says Harris in his book of

travels, "no less than twenty-two of the white species of rhinoceros, and were compelled in self-defence to slaughter four." Burchell's zebras and quaggas, brindled and white-tailed gnus, were found "in immense herds," elands and hartebeest in "vast herds;" springbok in "countless herds;" blesbok in "immense herds." Other examples were almost equally abundant.

Harris's books quickly attracted the notice of many English sportsmen. Oswell, Vardon, Murray, and Gordon Cumming, four of the greatest hunters of the middle of the century, all fascinated by his glowing descriptions, found their way to these happy hunting-grounds in the early forties, and the extermination of great game began in earnest. Traders were meanwhile pushing up-country, and the sale of firearms to natives—which has since proved one of the most fruitful sources of destruction—set in. From the time of Harris's memorable expedition, the downfall of the game of the far interior has proceeded with dreadful rapidity.

Meanwhile the emigrant Boers, discontented with British rule, had quitted Cape Colony, and were slowly thrusting their way north. In the country now called the Orange Free State, then tenanted only by a few Bushmen and vagrant tribespeople, they found a very paradise of game. Many of them settled there, and began the work of extermination.

Others, towards 1837, crossed the Vaal and, after several bloody encounters, drove Moselikatse (father of the late Lobengula) and his Matabele hordes north of the Limpopo. These vast regions of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, which were practically taken possession of by the Boers by the year 1840, may be said to have been countries virgin to the hunter. Cornwallis Harris and his hunter-comrade Richardson were practically the only white men who had ever pursued game there before the Dutch appeared. If we except the old Cape Colony, Griqualand West, and South Bechuanaland, no other regions in the world could vie with these new countries in wealth of animal life. And, especially, elands, hartebeest, bontebok, blesbok, quagga and Burchell zebra, brindled and white-tailed gnus, and the innumerable springbok contributed to render the face of the land literally darkened with game.

Between 1840 and 1875 it is certain that some millions of these animals must have been destroyed in the Transvaal and Orange Free State. As recently as 1860 a drive of game was got up for the Duke of Edinburgh—then Prince Alfred—in the Orange Free State. It was computed that some 25,000 head of game were enclosed by natives and driven in. Thousands—some say 6000—were shot, and several natives were trampled to death by the charge of a terrified herd of Burchell's zebras. To-day you

may wander far afield over those very plains without seeing even a solitary head of game. Only a few springbok, blesbok, and one or two troops of black wildebeest (white-tailed gnu), preserved by Dutch farmers, remain to those once crowded wilds. Of the Transvaal the same dismal story has to be told.

Soon after 1850 the Boers of these pastoral republics awoke to the fact that the skins of these myriads of beasts were marketable commodities. For years they were hard at it killing out the game; but the end came at last, and since 1880 there has been little animal life left to these territories. The Boers became perfect adepts at skin-hunting, putting in just sufficient powder to drive the missile home, and carefully cutting out their bullets for use on future occasions. So lately as 1876, when I first wandered in Cape Colony, I well remember the wagons coming down from the Free State and Transvaal, loaded up with nothing but the skins of blesbok, wildebeest, and springbok. This same miserable system of skin-hunting has been, unfortunately, and still is, where any game remains, pursued in all native states of South Africa. In those days, too, the sight of wagons from the far interior, loaded up with ivory, was not uncommon. I remember them well. In 1875 the export of ivory through the Cape Colony alone was worth £60,402. In 1885 it had sunk to £2150! A pitiful contrast indeed!

The quantities of game shot by the early successors of Cornwallis Harris north of the Orange River were prodigious. The rhinoceros bags of Oswell, Vardon, and C. J. Andersson I have already referred to. Dutch hunters often shot as many as fifty or sixty of these animals per man during a season. The rhinoceros was but one item of animal life thus destroyed. Gordon Cumming probably could boast the greatest bag of any of these Nimrods. He shot through South Africa from 1843 to 1850, and his butcher's bill must have been immense.

But, it is to be remembered, besides the great hunters, whose books have handed down to us this plethora of sport, there were always silently at work in the wilds those unknown gunners, who are content to slay without troubling the world with statistics. Englishmen, Boers, Griqua half-breeds, Hottentots, Bechuanas, and other native hunters; all these were, and still are, busy. And to the weapons of these obscurer sportsmen the great bulk of the game of South Africa has, of course, fallen. To-day, yesterday, and to-morrow, their work of destruction still goes forward. Nothing, it seems, can check it. How are you to patrol or preserve those silent, illimitable deserts, hundreds of miles even from a native town, where the game still lingers, and the black hunter—often armed now-a-days with a good Martini-Henry breech-loader—is at

work? At the same time one can hardly blame the black hunter for slaying the game of his country. It is a mere natural result of contact with the white man, and of the introduction of firearms.

Gordon Cumming began his hunting in 1843 in the northern part of Cape Colony. At that time the game still swarmed over the parched karroo plains. Quagga, wildebeest, hartebeest, and springbok fell in numbers to his rifle. In the deserts south of the Orange River—now sheep and goat walks in the Hope Town division of the Colony—he enjoyed magnificent sport with the gemsbok (*Oryx capensis*) which then abounded there. In those days the "trek-bokken," or migration of springboks, was common in the north of Cape Colony. Gordon Cumming witnessed one of these migrations. "I beheld the plains," he tells us, "and even the hill-sides which stretched away on every side of me, thickly covered, not with herds, but with one vast mass of springboks; as far as the eye could strain the landscape was alive with them, until they softened down into a dim red mass of living creatures." This "trek-bokken," Cumming estimated at some hundreds of thousands. On speaking to an old Boer about it, he remarked that "it was a very fair 'trek-bokken'; but," he added, "you this morning beheld only one flat covered with springboks. I give you my word that I have ridden a long

day's journey over a succession of flats covered with them as far as I could see, and as thick as sheep in a fold." I have myself heard much the same accounts from old farmers, English and Dutch, of the Cape Colony.

In these astonishing migrations, the springboks, travelling from the immense and arid deserts in the north-west of the colony, devoured every blade and leaf of vegetation before them. The frontier Boers often lost their entire crops, and even their flocks and herds were sometimes swept away before the myriads of antelopes and lost. It is on record that a lion has been seen encompassed by a mass of trekking springboks quite unable to escape, a pretty situation for the king of beasts truly!

It is a pleasure to record that the springbok, one of the most elegant and graceful of all the antelopes, still survives in some plenty in Cape Colony. I found it some years since on the Great Karroo in large numbers. My friend Mr. J. G. Millais had some excellent sport among springboks in the neighbourhood of Beaufort West two or three years back, and brought home some most interesting studies of these charming antelopes. In Bushmanland, to the north-west of the Colony, the "trek-bokken," on a greatly reduced scale, still continues, and the wandering Trek Boers in that region shoot large numbers of this game. As the Cape Colony becomes slowly settled up,

however, and runs are fenced in, the springbok will probably become semi-domesticated, or disappear like the rest of the game.

In the dry uninhabited regions of Bushmanland the springbok will doubtless survive to adorn the veldt for a good many years to come. Last year (1896) a greater "trek-bokken" than had been known for many years took place there.

Gordon Cumming gradually pushed his way north of the Orange River, enjoying the most extraordinary sport, and shooting incredible quantities of game. He shot all his elephants in the Bakwèna and Bamangwato country, never needing to go further north than Letloche, not very far from Shoshong—Khama's old town. There are old men yet alive among the Bakwèna and Bamangwato (among the latter is the chief Khama himself) who hunted with Cumming in those days, and remember his exploits perfectly well. Khama himself has proved an apt pupil, and no better or braver native sportsman has ever gone into the hunting veldt.

It was the fashion at one time to decry this great hunter's feats as purely apocryphal. This is an entire mistake. That Cumming did actually slay the immense numbers and varieties of great game mentioned in his book is vouched for by Livingstone himself in his *Missionary Travels in South*

Africa. Livingstone was in the country when Oswell, Vardon, Gordon Cumming, and other hunters were performing their feats, and had a good deal to say in their favour.

Following Gordon Cumming, and bitten by the wonderful records of his sport, came Baldwin, another mighty hunter, who shot from Zululand to the Zambesi from the years 1852 to 1860. Mr. Baldwin is, it is a pleasure to state, still alive and hearty, and able to enjoy sport in Cheshire and elsewhere.

In the middle fifties Baldwin shot chiefly in Zululand and Amatongaland, where among all kinds of heavy game he had immense sport. These countries, together with the adjacent Swaziland, are now all but denuded of great game. At a later period he shot in the far interior, visiting Lake Ngami and the Victoria Falls. A fine horseman and shot, and with any amount of nerve, William Charles Baldwin established a reputation in South Africa second to none of the great Nimrods who preceded him.[1] Many and many a big bull elephant, many a fine tusk of ivory, fell to his rifle. His game toll, too, must have been a very heavy one.

The last of the great hunters is Mr. F. C. Selous, and, of all the pursuers of big game, Selous has been,

[1] See *South African Hunting from Natal to the Zambesi.* Bentley, 1864 ; 3rd ed. 1894.

upon the whole, the most sparing and the least wasteful. In his early years, it is true, he pursued elephants for their ivory, as a means of livelihood and a matter of business; and by dint of immense courage, energy, and endurance, slew undoubtedly great numbers of the tusk-bearing pachyderms. But, apart from this, Selous has always been one of the most merciful of hunters, killing only for the sake of procuring specimens or to supply food for his followers.

Just as Cumming and Oswell were attracted to the great hunting-grounds by the fascinating records of Cornwallis Harris, and as Baldwin and others in their turn followed eagerly in the wake of Gordon Cumming, so Selous seems to have gravitated to South Africa from a perusal of the deeds of foregone heroes, especially of Cumming and Baldwin.

But Selous found things already greatly changed. By the year 1871, when he first landed, much of middle Bechuanaland and the Transvaal had been shot out. To get among the elephants he sought, the lad—as he then was—had to penetrate to Matabeleland, gain permission of Lobengula, and then pass into Mashonaland.

In Mashonaland, along the Zambesi, in the Mababi veldt (Ngamiland), and in the Chobe river country, Selous for many years had his fill of sport and excitement. But the elephants vanished rapidly

and became more and more hard to procure, and for some years before the opening up of Mashonaland (in which he has played so great a part), the last and best of the African hunters—as one may well call him—shot specimens for museums and turned his attention to exploration. Whatever damage he may have done in early years among the elephants, the magnificent specimens of great game sent home by Selous to the Natural History and other Museums, amply deliver him from the charge of mere wasteful slaughter.

From this charge it is impossible to absolve many of the great hunters. Gordon Cumming and many others were undoubtedly wasteful in their methods; they shot far too often for the mere pleasure of slaying, and wasted enormous numbers of rare, singular, and beautiful game. One can, perhaps, hardly blame them; the profusion was so great, the temptation so overpowering. No one, who has not been in the presence of great game, mounted and armed, can understand how difficult it is to stay one's hand at such a time.

On the other hand, there are many things to be said in extenuation of the great British hunters, whose exploits in South Africa have for the last fifty years been alternately the themes of admiration and regret. They were magnificent pioneers, none better ever represented England; and they have

contributed perhaps more than any other cause to the opening up of the interior. The frontier Boer of the middle of this century called all the country north of the Orange River "onze veldt," "our country," and declared that no other white men should enter it. But the missionaries, the traders, and above all the hunters, have been too much for them.

Of late years the gold-seekers have, too, been pressing northward, and, thanks chiefly to these pioneers, the hunters, the traders, and the gold-diggers, Central South Africa is at the present day an English and not a Dutch dependency.

The wonderful courage and energy of the early hunters contributed also, in a very great degree, to the respect and admiration in which the Englishman has been held by the black man. In nearly every instance these early explorers were men of perfect truth, honesty, and fairness, from whom the natives quickly formed an excellent impression of the English character. Since the invasion of the interior in recent years by a swarm of mixed nationalities, the estimate of the white man has been a good deal depreciated; yet it may be said with some satisfaction that in nearly every instance the word of the Englishman is still accepted as his bond —good always for money or its equivalent—among the native races throughout Southern Africa. For

this excellent character in the South African hinterland—for the attributes of chivalrous courage, honesty, and fair dealing—again, I repeat, we have to thank mainly the race of English hunters. If they destroyed the game, they built up for their successors a magnificent reputation.

I have said that for many years I have taken a deep interest in the history of the game of South Africa. Some years since, in wandering through Cape Colony, I took a good deal of trouble to get at the distribution and numbers of the fauna still remaining. I found, of course, that terrible devastation had taken place. Most of the nobler beasts had vanished. The crowds of game decorating the veldt in Gordon Cumming's time were gone, or nearly gone. The quagga had become quite extinct; the eland and the blesbok had disappeared; the lion and the last rhinoceros had given up the ghost in the fifties; the gemsbok and hartebeest only found shelter in scant numbers in the desert fringing the Orange River. Almost the last hippopotamus of the Cape rivers was killed in 1874. A few of these behemoths are, however, still to be found in the lower waters of the Orange. The elephant and the buffalo, thanks to timely measures of the Cape Government in years gone by, had, strangely enough, been preserved from extinction. It is refreshing to be able to record that troops of these animals still

range freely in the Knysna Forest, the Addo Bush, and one or two other densely-jungled localities on the southern borders of Cape Colony. But, although these animals still roam the old Colony within sight of the Indian Ocean, it is a melancholy fact that you may now travel for a thousand miles and more up-country without finding a single specimen. The koodoo, one of the most magnificent of all the antelopes, thanks to the efforts of a few English farmers in the eastern province, still exists in the colony. The leopard defies extermination, so far, and haunts the Cape mountains in nearly every district. The mountain zebra (*Equus zebra*) lingers on a few ranges of the colony, along the Drakensberg, and as far east as the Lebombo Mountains in Swaziland. I have watched with the keenest delight a troop preserved on the farms of friends of mine in the eastern province, no great way from Port Elizabeth, where they were, of course, never shot at. The curious bontebok (*Alcelaphus pygargus*), to be numbered of old in the Orange Free State and Cape Colony by hundreds of thousands, is, as I have shown, at the present moment represented by one single troop, long preserved on the farm of a Dutch gentleman, Mr. Van der Byl, near Cape Agulhas. These are the last of their race. The white-tailed gnu is almost as near extinction, although forty years ago inordinately plentiful. The fecund springbok is still

fairly abundant on the karroos, and especially upon the north-west plains near the Orange River. Some of the smaller antelopes, such as the rhebok, bush-bok, steinbok, duyker, klipspringer, oribi, and blaauw-bok, still remain here and there in fair numbers. The animals here enumerated form the poor remnant of the once innumerable Cape fauna; and, but for the timely measures of protection passed by the Cape Government, and the private exertions of some of the colonists, most of these animals would by this time assuredly have disappeared from the country south of the Orange River. In Natal very much the same state of things prevails, and beyond Natal, in Zululand, Amatongaland, and Swaziland, the big game has, except in one or two heavily-jungled localities, practically vanished.

In 1890-91 I travelled through the whole of Bechuanaland, part of the Transvaal, much of the Kalahari and Ngamiland. Here I found the conditions of the great game even more deplorable in many ways than in Cape Colony.

Guns are now plentiful in every part of the interior, and native gunners—next to the Boer skin hunters, the most reckless of all destroyers of animal life—are incessantly at work. Nearly the whole of British Bechuanaland and the Protectorate, as far as Khama's country, has now been denuded of heavy game. Here and there in the former territory a

few troops of hartebeest still eke out a shuddering existence. But all the remainder of that wonderful collection of animal life depicted by Cornwallis Harris has vanished. The plains were tenantless, save for the small buck (steinbok and duyker). On the Maritsani river, where Harris had found himself involved in bewildering crowds of every kind of rare game, only a troop or two of hartebeest were left. On the Molopo—Gordon Cumming's "darling little Molopo"—where that great hunter, clad in his Highland kilt, and with bare arms and legs and vast red beard, had pursued the lion, buffalo, and other game, there remained but a reed-buck or two. English sportsmen at Mafeking and Vryburg were now hunting with foxhounds the jackal and the duyker, where their predecessors had not long before pursued all kinds of noble beasts of chase, from the giraffe downwards.

To the westward, on entering the South Kalahari, I found gemsbok, hartebeest, koodoo, wildebeest, and a lion or two still maintaining a precarious sanctuary. Even here, however, the assaults of native hunters cannot be long resisted. The springbok and blesbok had clean been swept away from South Bechuanaland, leaving the great grass plains far more devoid of life even than in the Cape Colony.[1]

[1] I am delighted to hear, just as this goes to press, that blesbok are showing in British Bechuanaland again, in the

Not until we had passed Khama's town of Palachwe, and entered the waterless tracts of the North Kalahari, did we see any quantity of game. In the North Kalahari, and along the southern bank of the Botletli river, Ngamiland, we found and procured specimens of giraffe, Burchell's zebra, eland, brindled gnu (blue wildebeest), lechwe water-buck, springbok, and some of the smaller antelopes. Tsesseby and pallah are becoming very scarce; of roan antelope we only found spoor once or twice. The elephant had disappeared, save for one small troop we heard of south of Lake Ngami. This troop has since been destroyed by the Batauana hunters round the lake. The rhinoceroses, black and white, and the buffalo, had disappeared. The lion is still plentiful along the Botletli river, but owing to the number of native guns, it is not often seen, and we only found spoor occasionally round our wagons. The hippopotamus still survives, albeit in diminishing numbers, in Lake Ngami and the Botletli. How plentiful elephants must have been forty years ago one could see by the deep paths, leading to the water, left by these animals. When one remembers that within two years of the discovery of Lake Ngami in 1849, by Livingstone, Oswell, and Murray, nine

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neighbourhood of Vryburg, for the first time for nine or ten years. This is a hopeful sign, attributable to preservation by a few farmers in the Western Transvaal.

hundred elephants were slaughtered round the lake, one can appreciate the terrible nature of their extermination ever since. It is not many years since, in the Okavango country, beyond Lake Ngami, some Boer hunters (the Van Zyls and others) drove a herd of a hundred and four elephants into a marsh, where they became helplessly embogged, and slew every member of the troop before setting of the sun.

We found giraffes plentiful in 1890 in the dry waterless acacia forests of the North Kalahari country, some twenty miles south of the southern bank of the Botletli, and were fortunate in being able to procure fine specimens. When one reflects, however, how constantly, even in these difficult and secluded regions, native hunters are at work, one cannot resist the conclusion that this wonderful quadruped cannot last many years south of the Zambesi. Round the adjacent country of Lake Ngami, in the years following our expedition, many hundreds of giraffes have been slain by native hunters, solely for the value of their hides, from which sandals and colonial whips (sjamboks) are now chiefly made. Nothing can withstand such extermination! We found in this region, also, wild ostriches, gemsboks, hartebeests, and koodoos in some plenty. Amongst all these fine creatures, however, the same incessant destruction is going on.

Turning to the eastward, in Mashonaland the same insatiate destruction is rapidly exterminating the great game. Hunters, diggers, prospectors, passing travellers, natives, all are hard at work. Since the advent of the pioneers in 1890 the fauna of that almost virgin veldt have been terribly decimated.

Eastward of Mashonaland, again, along the Pungwe river and in other regions, which four or five years since were to be found abounding in game, the same devastation is going on.

In short, it may be said that, notwithstanding proclamations and attempted game laws, in these remoter portions of the South African interior the great game is disappearing day by day and hour by hour, and apparently will soon be little less than a mere reminiscence.

It is true that stringent game laws have for some time been proclaimed in Bechuanaland, the Protectorate, the Chartered Company's territories, the Transvaal, Orange Free State, and even Mozambique. The moderate measure of success attending the efforts of preservation in Cape Colony may be cited as proof of what may be done in other countries. But even in the long-settled districts of Cape Colony, where writs run and native gunners are controlled, preservation has been found to be no easy matter. Even there game laws are constantly evaded by Trek Boers and others; and at the present time it is

impossible to say whether the remnant of the game will be able to be retained permanently in the districts south of the Orange River.

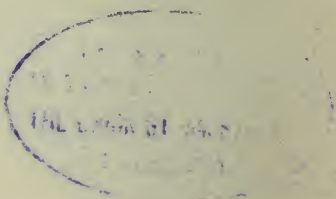
In the vast countries of the interior, where the veldt is wider, and the population much more scattered than in Cape Colony, preservation is almost a matter of impossibility. How are you to restrain men a hundred miles from a single policeman or representative of justice? How are you to prevent the hungry prospector and digger in those remote solitudes, when a great buck stands temptingly within gunshot?[1] How are you to check the native gunner, creeping about the dense bush, always on the look-out for a pot shot? The thing is, I fear, an impossibility. I know that in Bechuanaland the game laws are constantly broken by Dutch, natives, and colonial settlers, and that the game still disappears.

Quite recently a project was set on foot among some prominent sportsmen and naturalists, which, if successfully carried out, may help in some degree to preserve many of the rarer species of the African mammalia—especially the larger antelopes—in some district of the interior.

[1] Under recent regulations of the British South Africa Company, travellers and prospectors killing game for their own consumption ten miles beyond a township are exempt from penalties. Occupiers of land may also kill game upon their own holdings. Here is a fruitful source of extermination!

The idea, which is at present inchoate, is to secure if possible a grant of a tract of land—some 100,000 acres—in Mashonaland or the adjacent territories, fence it in, and form a park in which small herds of game may be enclosed. It would not be difficult to procure the young of many kinds of African game and rear them in such a park, and drafts could be sold off from time to time, to supply the collections of European and other countries. Whether the help of the Chartered Company or of the British Government in South Africa can be enlisted for such an object—a matter of vital importance; whether the scheme, if brought to a head, can be made self-supporting—also an important consideration; these are questions hardly within the scope of this chapter.

But that any undertaking having for its object the rescue and preservation of the disappearing fauna of South Africa will have in this country the sympathy of all true lovers of nature and animal life, is, I think, a fact beyond the realm of argument.



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